

Hebrew 10:1-10 (tx: 5-10)

THE CROSS AT CHRISTMAS

- I. I came
- II. I am the One
- III. I am here

INTRODUCTION

Now I can imagine some of you are thinking & asking: “Why celebrate the Lord’s Supper at Christmas?”

- “For after all, Christmas is a joyful day to celebrate with excitement about angels & shepherds, the Christ-Child & wisemen.
- “But the Lord’s Supper is more solemn & sacred to be celebrated with more dignity, for it is all about the cross & blood & death.”

But really that’s wrong to think that.

- because without the cross Christmas wouldn’t be a day of joy & glad tidings.
- & too, we should never see the Lord’s Supper as a funeral, but as a wedding reception.
 - we must then celebrate it with joy & excitement that Jesus Christ came & died & arose to save us from sin & death.
 - & to give us everlasting life with God: something to really rejoice about!.

Th’fore, its proper to celebrate **Christmas** with **Communion** & the celebration of Jesus’ death on the cross.

- for we must not just read the Christmas story according to Matthew, Luke, & John.
 - or only hear it from those familiar persons associated with Christmas.
 - Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, & Wisemen.
- O, yes, their story is important & beautiful & stirring.
 - but they don’t contain the full message & meaning of Christmas.

And so we must also read the **Christmas** story according to Jesus Himself.

- we must listen to what He has to say.
- for that would be more important & significant, wouldn’t it?

Well, we have Jesus’ own words & version of the **Christmas** story in **Heb.10**.

- for here we see the author of Hebrews indicates the words of **Ps.40** are Jesus’ words about **Christmas**.
- & we notice Jesus’ story about Christmas has the CROSS in it.

I. I CAME

For the 1st truth we see here in Jesus’ **Christmas** story is that He says: “I came to die.”

- you see, Heb.10 is making a contrast between the OT. sacrifices with the 1 perfect sacrifice of Jesus.
- & it reminds us that OT. people came with sacrifices & offerings, believing God would forgive & accept them on the basis of the sacrificial death of an innocent substitute.

Yet those **OT.** sacrifices & offerings, repeated year after year, were ineffective & inefficient in & of themselves to bring salvation from sin.

- instead all they did was to remind people of their sins.
- for they were just shadows—temporary, preparatory indicators that pointed to better things to come.
- they were representatives of the real thing that was coming.
 - the coming of Jesus Christ the Savior, & His full & final, perfect sacrifice for sin.

Th'fore, Heb.10:5 begins: "Therefore."

- or because those OT. sacrifices really didn't remove sin & bring salvation,--
 - so in contrast & with profound differences to those former things & shadowy representatives, Jesus Christ came as the real thing.
- He has set aside or fulfilled all those OT., numerous, ineffective sacrifices & offerings.
 - & by His one, perfect sacrificial death He as actually removed sin & accomplishes salvation.

So Heb.10:5 says: "When Christ came into the world", or, as He says in vs.7, "I have come."

- that's Hebrews way of saying: "When Jesus was born."
- this then, refers to Christmas when God almighty Himself actually became human here on earth.

It means He took on a genuine human nature just like ours, for He was born.

- vs.5 says Jesus received a body God had prepared for Him.
- one, as Bible teaches, God the Holy Spirit conceived & fashioned in the Virgin Mary's womb.

But notice our passage also tells why Jesus came or was born on Christmas day.

- He Himself says with the words of Ps.40 that He came because God didn't desire or delight in sacrifices & offerings, though He commanded Israel to bring them.
- so what that means, ISam.15 says, is that God isn't satisfied with a lot of external rituals & rules.
 - what really pleases Him is genuine, devoted service & obedience of the heart & life surrendered totally to Him & His will.

Th'fore, no outward offerings can ever be substituted for obedience.

- that's because Lord can't be bought off with external gifts.
- so no religious activities, no matter how pious they are, are acceptable to God if they aren't expressions of a real, loving, complete dedication of a contrite believing heart & holy life.

So then Jesus had to come & was born to receive a body to do God's will.

- for that is far better than sacrifices & offerings.
- & in light of what we have just seen, God's will was that Jesus was born to be our Savior.

He was to come to this earth & live among us.

- He was to take on our body or human nature & offer it or Himself to God as living sacrifice of perfect obedience & service.
- th'fore, the fact Jesus became human was an act of submission to God's will & the beginning of His supreme submission to His will that resulted in His death on the cross for salvation of us sinners.

Now, how often don't we forget this purpose of Christmas.

- we focus so much on the birth of a baby & all those other nice, sentimental things that we miss the most important truth about Christmas.
- we forget the Christmas story in Scriptures stresses the fact Jesus came here or was born to die.
- we forget that, which is what the Lord's Supper is all about, that the eternal Son of God came on Christmas.
 - that He took on a human body so He could obey & die for our salvation.
- we forget this so that we miss the real joy Jesus came to bring us.

That's why it is good to also celebrate the Lord's Supper at Christmas time.

- that's because our modern-day Christmas celebration so often make joy cheap & superficial.

- we try to find joy with cantatas & pageants, extraordinary decorations & music, & with different liturgical activities—which are all okay & good.
- but the deepest, lasting joy of Christmas doesn't come from these things.
 - it comes only from Jesus' gift of Himself on the cross, which Holy Communion stresses.
- so if we leave out the cross, we miss the real meaning of Christmas & its correct celebration.

And that's why, it is interesting to note, in our Reformed history & heritage, the Church Order of Dordt, written in 1618, calls for the celebration of Communion at Christmas.

- that was because during the Reformation the days that marked the saving events of Christ's life had gotten all mixed up with secular ceremonies & pagan festivities.
- th'fore, to reform the celebration of Christmas, as well as Easter & Pentecost, the Synod of Dordt told the churches to get back to the basics & their meaning.
 - & to put Christ back into their celebration by observing the Lord Supper on Christmas.

And today we find the same thing happening concerning the celebration of Christ's saving acts.

- so to reform them & to reemphasize again that Christmas is Christ being born to die for our salvation,--
- it is well to heed again what Dordt said & have Communion during Christmas.
 - for it reminds us Christmas is really a day to help us remember Jesus was born to die to enable us to be born again & to live again eternally with God.

II. I AM THE ONE

Now the 2nd truth we see in Jesus' Christmas story in Heb.10 is that He says: "I am the One".

- He is saying He is the only One come to perfectly fulfill the purpose of Christmas by doing God's will.
 - for He says: "Here I am as it is written of me in the scroll. I have come to do the divine will."
- indeed, it was Jesus' all consuming & constant desire in His life & His work to do God's will.
 - & to do it by taking on our human flesh & all that that includes.

We see that when we note that Heb.10 refers to Ps. 40 & says Lord prepared a body for Jesus.

- but **Ps.40** also states Lord pierced or opened His ear.
- now that word, "pierced" means to dig or hollow out an ear, & that involves the work of forming a body.
- but the opening of an ear could also refer to Ex.21 about boring a slave's ear.
 - & that's a symbol of the slave's willingness to remain obedient to his master.

Well then, no matter what is referred to in Heb.10 or Ps.40, the idea of a pierced or opened ear,--

- being a shaped body or a surrendered body, it is the same.
- it means Jesus is saying He is the One whose ear is open to God's Word & will so that He is willing to obey Him.
 - He is willing to surrender Himself to do the divine work of salvation to fulfill what is written in God's law or Word.

And that Word prophesied & promised the Savior had to be born & live in perfect obedience to Lord's will.

- & that meant He had to suffer & die on the cross to pay for the sins of the world, which we can't ever do as sinners.
- th'fore, Jesus is saying: "I have come as God's Word has foretold.
 - "Here I am, willing to pay the price of sin to the full; willing to perfectly obey God's law & endure sin's punishment.
 - "To surrender my body & life to accomplish God's plan of salvation."

It is like that young soldier who was a paymaster in the Russian army.

- he had gambled away all the salaries of the soldiers in his barrack.
- so one night he wrote on a ledger: “Great debt. Who can pay it?”
- but the soldier fell asleep, & as he slept Czar Nicholas I came by, saw the soldier & what he wrote.
 - filled with mercy, the Czar wrote one word under the soldier’s message & slipped out.
- the soldier woke up, reached for his gun, but then saw under his writing: “Great debt. Who can pay it?”
 - he saw the one word the Czar had written: it was “Nicholas”.
 - the Czar was willing & did pay the debt & forgave the soldier.

Now, what an awesome debt we owe God because of our sins.

- who can ever pay it?
- well, Jesus steps forward & signs His name to our ledger: “Jesus Christ.”
 - He has come on Christmas as the only One who could & did pay it, even as the Lord’s Supper assures us.

Our passage then, teaches Jesus was delighted to do God’s will & pay our debt.

- He wasn’t like someone who is the only one who can do something, but he does it reluctantly.
- Jesus didn’t say to God His Father: “O I suppose, if You can’t get anybody else to do the work of salvation, then I guess I will have to go & die.”

No, but Jesus was delighted to do God’s saving will & work.

- yes, even give up the position & privilege He enjoyed as God’s Son to become like us.
 - to be born in a manger, suffer all His life, & then die on the cross.
- for He say: “Here am I. I am the One to fulfill Your Word & accomplish salvation.

So Bible says it was Jesus’ delight & pleasure to save & bring God’s sons & daughters to eternal glory.

- that’s why we celebrate Christmas with the Lord’s Supper.
- for we want to share in Jesus’ joy of doing God’s will & work for our salvation so that we possess & experience His life of joy & peace.

III. I AM HERE

Finally, the 3rd truth in Jesus’ Christmas story in Heb.10 is found in His statement: “Here I am”.

- you see, Christmas isn’t just a celebration of the birth of a child that happened over 2000 years ago, & that’s all there is.
- if that were true, if all it is that someone was born & died so long ago in some far off land, then Christmas, Good Friday, & Easter are just events of the past so that it really doesn’t matter for us today.

But the fact Jesus says: “I am here”, means Christmas is really alive for us today.

- He came, was born, & died, but He is still here, never to depart.
- He arose & lives, & though He returned to heaven to rule over all, He still comes to us where we live.
 - & through His Word & the Holy Spirit He applies to us the salvation He accomplished.

Th’fore, our passage says through Jesus’ coming & birth & obedient life,--

- through His one offering of His body in perfect obedience & sacrifice to God for our sins, we are saved & made to be like Him.
- in Him by faith we are forgiven & set apart to be in God’s family forever, freed from sin’s penalty of eternal death.
 - & we are continually being renewed from sin’s power & pollution to live holy, Christ-like lives.
- & then, someday we will be freed fully & finally from sin’s presence in the eternal glory of the new heaven & earth.

CONCLUSION

So then, **Christmas** lives & enables us to live.

- that's because there's also a cross in it: a cross stained with God's saving blood, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has come—was born, lived & died, arose & is still here.
- & that's what the Lord Supper so vividly pictures & proves to us.

Th'fore, as we celebrate **Christmas** with Communion, may we worship & praise the Lord for the salvation & joy & life that's ours because of **Christmas**.

- because Christ was born, was crucified, & now lives.
- & may we all experience & enjoy at this season of year, & always, the fact as a familiar Christmas carol (O Little Town of Bethlehem) puts it:
 - “How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.
O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend in us, we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in, Be with us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide in us, Our Lord Emmanuel.”

AMEN