

## FOCUS ON THE CROSS

You can see many people at the same time, but you can only focus on one. You can see one person, but you can only focus on one part of that person at a time. The dentist and the eye doctor both focus on your face, but they focus on different parts of your face. The eye doctor can only focus on one eye at a time, and the dentist can only focus on one tooth at a time. Salvation involves being able to focus on the cross. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, the Roman soldiers lifted up Jesus. The only way to be saved is to focus on Christ and the cross.

The Scriptures remind us that **“the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Heb 9:22)** For this reason literally millions of animals have been sacrificed. It is assumed that God Himself made the first animal sacrifices when He made garments of skin for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). Between Eden and Calvary the blood of millions of innocent animals covered altars as men sought forgiveness. Solomon dedicated the Temple by sacrificing 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats (1 Ki. 8:63). When Jesus and His Apostles killed their Passover lamb, the Jewish historian, Josephus, estimated that there were 250,000 other lambs that died in Jerusalem on the same day. Unfortunately, **“it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (Heb 10:4)** That’s why Jesus had to die! He was destined to die for our sins before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). God instituted the sacrificial system to help us understand that sacrifice, that’s why we need to focus on Christ. In those endless sacrifices, however, no sins were actually forgiven. In fact, those sacrifices were an annual reminder that made the people of God feel guilty for their sins (Heb. 10:2, 3).

So the stage is set for us to focus on the great contrast between the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of Christ. **“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But 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, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” (Heb 10:11-14).** Note that the sacrifice of Jesus makes us “perfect” while the sacrifice of animals does not.

Hebrew sacrifices “covered” sins, but did not actually forgive them. God “covered” Adam and Eve with skins, and the High Priest sprinkled blood on the “covering” of the ark. He did that one day in the year on “Yom Kippur” which means “The Day of the Covering”. David wrote: **“Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered” (Rom. 4:7).** In Christ, however, our sins are not just covered, they are taken away (Acts 3:19). In Christ we are “justified” (Rom.5:1. Justification means that it is “just as if we had never sinned”.

Remember! Since the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, Jesus died for the forgiveness of all those sins committed under the old covenant (Rom. 9:15.) The huge debt of sin from Eden to Calvary is beyond human comprehension. 700 years before Christ Isaiah said that “He was wounded for our transgressions” (Is. 53:5 ) 500 years before Christ Daniel predicted that Jesus would come and “put an end to sin” (Dan. 9:24). Since Jesus made only “one sacrifice for sin”, that one sacrifice not only paid the debt for past sins, but for future sins as well. Even though His sacrifice was “once for all” Jesus still lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). Praise God! That’s why there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1)

When the church in Troaz gathered on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7), it is generally assumed that they gathered to take the Lord’s Supper. This weekly reminder to focus on the Body and Blood of Christ was so important that to forget that focus was to eat and drink damnation to yourself (I Cor. 11:29). Please “examine yourself” before you eat (1 Cor. 11:28).