Digging Deeper: The Greater Meaning of Hebrews 10:1

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

> *“For since the Law has a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make those who approach perfect.” (Hebrews 10:1)*

Paul wrote to Hebrew Christians who had grown up keeping the Mosaic Law. The main point is that the Law was never the final goal. It pointed ahead to something far better, Jesus and his sacrifice. The day’s text shows why this was hard to accept: these Christians had to let go of a way of worship that had shaped

their diet, their customs, and even who they ate with. Seeing the Law as a shadow helped them move forward.

1 “A Shadow”: An Outline of Something Real (*σκιά, skia*)

The Greek word σκιά (*skia*) means a shadow, the dark outline an object casts. A shadow tells you something is there and gives you its rough shape, but it is not the thing itself. The tabernacle, the priests, and the animal sacrifices were outlines of greater things Jehovah had in mind.

Paul said the priests were “offering sacred service in a typical representation and a shadow of the heavenly things.”

(Hebrews 8:5) Once the real thing arrived, no one needed to keep staring at the shadow.

- The Law was a gift from Jehovah, but its job was to point ahead, not to last forever.

2 "The Very Substance": The Reality Arrives in Christ (*εἰκών, eikon*)

The word translated "very substance" is εἰκών (*eikon*), which usually means an image or likeness. Here Paul contrasts it with a shadow, so it means the actual form of the thing, the reality itself. The Law had the outline. It did not have the real thing.

Paul made the same contrast elsewhere: "Those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ." (Colossians 2:17) Jesus is the

High Priest, and his own blood is the sacrifice that the Law only pictured. (Hebrews 9:11, 12)

- When we understand what the Law pictured, we appreciate Jesus and his ransom even more.

3 "Make Perfect": What the Old Sacrifices Could Not Do (*τελειόω, teleioo*)

The verb τελειόω (*teleioo*) means to complete something or bring it to its intended goal. Year after year, the same animal sacrifices were offered, yet they could never fully clean a person's conscience. As Paul said, "it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take sins away." (Hebrews 10:4)

Jesus' sacrifice did what the Law could not: "For it is by one sacrificial offering that he has made those who are being sanctified perfect for all time."

(Hebrews 10:14) That is why Jehovah no longer accepted the Jewish sacrifices after Jesus died, and why Jewish Christians had to adjust, even mature ones like Peter. (Acts 10:14; Galatians 2:11-14)

- Our clean standing before Jehovah rests on Jesus' one sacrifice, not on rituals we repeat.

Key Spiritual Reflections

- **Willing to Adjust:** When Jehovah's organization clarifies an understanding, am I quick to accept it, even if I was used to the old way? (Acts 10:14; Galatians 2:11-14)
- **Holding On to the Reality:** Do I value Jesus' ransom as the real thing that the Law only pictured? (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:10)

- **A Clean Conscience:** When I feel weighed down by past mistakes, do I remember that Jesus' sacrifice can make me clean for all time? (Hebrews 10:14)