

# Sacrifice and Offering You Did Not Desire

## Making Sense of Psalm 40:6

### Lesson Notes

#### 1.0 General Comments on Psalm 40

- This is a thanksgiving psalm with a lament portion.
- Two-part outline: In the first half (40:1-10), David tells of how God got him out of the pit, a sticky situation. The second half of the psalm (40:11-17) includes a lament portion, evidently another pit.
- This psalm is great to read during troubled times.

#### 2.0 Possible Contexts and Linkages

- Theme of waiting upon God – Psalm 38 and 39; Kingship and coronation – Psalm 2
- Personal response to God – Isaiah 50:4, Psalm 101, Hebrews 10:5-10
- Obedience unto death – Philippians 2:8
- Willing sacrifice of self toward lifelong servitude<sup>1</sup> – Exodus 21:1-6
- Other Messianic psalms

#### 3.0 Text and Translations (Psalms 40:6 and Hebrews 10:5ff)

Psalm 40:6

(WLC) נִבַח וּמְנַחֶהָ | לֹא-חָפְצָתָ אָזְנוֹיִם כְּרִיתָ לִי עוֹלָה  
וְחַטָּאתָ לֹא שְׂאֵלָתָ :

(NIV) Sacrifice and offering you did not desire  
but my ears you have opened  
burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.

(KJB) Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened  
(LXX [:39], literal) Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared

(ESV) In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted,  
but you have given me an open ear.  
Burnt offering and sin offering  
you have not required.

Hebrews 10:5-7

(NIV) Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

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<sup>1</sup>Here we find referenced to Psalm 40 an “acted parable.” The bondsman who loves his Master so much has no wish to be free from his service. He opts for lifelong servitude. Here is a holy dedication to the perpetual service of a much-loved Lord, symbolized by a pierced ear at the door of (God’s) house. This sets the backdrop for the emphasis on “heart.” Servants-by-choice display a willingness to hear and obey every word of instruction and command (cf. Isaiah 50:4,5).

Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, my God. "'

(KJB) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me...

#### 4.0 Linguistic Issues

- "Sacrifice ... offering ... burnt-offering ... sin-offering." Scholars note these are the four basic sacrifices of the Law of Moses.
- "No delight" and "not required." These make it absolutely certain that we have here a reference to the New Covenant. Here in Psalms the sacrifices mentioned were absolutely required.
- "Opening of the ear." Also in Isa 48:8; 50:5 (though by a different word in Hebrew). This opens up a whole stream of complex study. "Ear" and "body" are related. Cf. Hebrews 10:5, the reading SWMA (body) is in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus.

#### 5.0 Theology

- Note connections between Psalms 40 and Exodus 21 and Hebrews 10. There is a strand of Messianic theology here.
  - Verse 2: We all have times of challenge and despair. The Messiah had such times.
  - Verse 5: We may not completely know what God has planned for each of us.
  - Verse 6: A master would make a hole in his slave's ear and fasten it to the door, if the slave wanted to stay with his master (Exodus 21).<sup>2</sup> Here is an image of self-oblation.
  - Verse 7: In the New Testament, Jesus said that this was about him. This is in Hebrews 10: 7.
- Sacrifice and offering are mentioned. God is not at all impressed with the sacrifices and offerings of the Israelites coming from hearts that were distant from Him (Isaiah 1:13, 16-17)
- God required sacrifices in the Old Covenant, but all these requirements fulfilled in Jesus. Psalm 40 might be seen as a preview of a ceremony taking place between the Father and the Son, where the psalmist spoke prophetically for the Messiah: *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened.* Jesus was a perfect sacrifice *and* bond-slave to the Father (Philippians 2:7).
- There is an anticipation of a coming age. There is a sense that a new covenant is coming in which God will remove the hard (non-volunteer, unyielding) hearts and replace them with hearts inclined to do His will (Ezekiel 11:19-20). The centerpiece of this new age is Jesus. He is the perfect example of the servant who "opens his ear" to God and was obedient. Isn't this what he displayed on the cross?

#### 6.0 Conclusions

1. Psalm 40 is a thanksgiving psalm with lament and messianic elements.
2. There is a pervading theology linking Exodus 21, Psalm 40, and Hebrews 10.
3. In applying this theology in our lives, we are encouraged to take on the heart of the Hebrew slave (Exodus 21) and the song of David (Psalm 40), giving ourselves fully to the Lord. This is what Christ has so beautifully demonstrated for us.

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<sup>2</sup>Some scholars affirm that "the door-post" here was located in the master's private dwelling, and others are equally sure that the ceremony of the awl and the ear was to take place only at the sanctuary, the tabernacle, or later, the temple. Studies come down differently on this matter.