

Sins Rolled Forward

- Many have taught that, under the Law, sins were not actually forgiven, but were “rolled forward” year by year, being actually forgiven in the sacrifice of Jesus. The case is built on the phrasing of Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35, 5:10, 13, 16, 18, 6:7, 19:22, Numbers 15:25, 26, 28, and Deuteronomy 21:8, “and it shall be forgiven him.” However, both the sacrifice and the forgiveness are in the future in all of those passages, so one cannot draw the conclusion that the two are separate in time. The same phrasing is used in James 5:15, but no one concludes that the forgiveness of a Christian is delayed to some future time. Further, in Numbers 14:19 and Psalms 85:2, forgiveness for Israel is stated in the past tense, which is opposite to the “rolled forward” theory.
- So, what is the point of Hebrews 10? “For the Law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.” (10:1) As the chapter develops, the point is made that the physical act of Mosaic sacrifice was not the goal (10:5, quoting Psalm 40:6 – 8), but rather seeking “to do Your will, O God,” which is called faith. (10:22)
- God set up Israel and the Law as an illustration of (shadow of), among other things, the world. The vast majority of Israelites were unfaithful. Yet, on Yom Kippur, the sins of the nation were forgiven. (Leviticus 16) Jesus’ sacrifice was the fulfillment of, among many other things, the sacrifices of that annual event. The sins of the nation (the illustration of the world) were forgiven. Jesus’ sacrifice was for the forgiveness of all people of all time, faithful or not (1 John 2:2, Romans 5:6 – 8, 2 Corinthians 5:14 – 15). But, like Israel, most people did not take this gift to heart. The sacrifice was not effective. (Hebrews 10:2) Jesus’ purpose was to reserve all people for godly purposes (sanctified, Hebrews 10:10, 10:14). Most “draw back unto destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (10:39)
- This answers the question of the fate of those outside of Israel before the gospel of Jesus went to the whole world. Israel was the illustration. Most of the world, although reminded of forgiveness year by year (an illustration for the continuous, perhaps occasional, exposure of the world to the gospel), turn back to the comfort and security of slavery to sin and the fear of death, judgment by behavior which Romans 2 – 3 prove is untenable. But the faithful are “perfected,” (10:14) as were those in Hebrews 11 (righteous, pleasing to God, rewarded, *etc.*) The faithful have a consistent rubric; the behaviorists are inconsistent.
- “The worshippers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.” (10:2) Obviously, the authors of the New Testament described sin and remembered their own sins. So what does it mean that they have no “consciousness” of sins? We, theoretically, no longer see our misdeeds as a barrier between ourselves and God. Rather, we “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (10:22)
- The “rolled forward” theory is a relic of legalism in which the sacrifice of Jesus is turned into a constant reminder of sin. In a way, for the unbeliever, it is. But the bigger picture is that the sacrifice of Jesus releases all people from slavery, although that sacrifice does not guarantee heaven. Faith does that. Most people turn back to a slavery that never existed (Hebrews 11). The prison doors are open. Most choose to stay.