

“The Once for All Offering of Christ”
(Hebrews 9:23-28)

Introduction: Last week the author to the Hebrews was showing us the difference between the sacrifices offered by the priests and that offered by Christ. The sacrifices which the priests offered were able to keep the people ceremonially clean, that is, it was able to keep them in the covenant and close to the pictures of heaven. They were able to cleanse their flesh, but they were not able to wash them of their sins and bring them into heaven itself. But the sacrifice of Christ can and actually did wash away their sins and made them fit for heaven. He actually saved His people and entered into heaven before them, to prepare a place for them. His blood inaugurated the New Covenant. In this covenant, you don't need to do anything to be saved, except only to believe. Christ has done it all. He has kept His Father's commandments. He has died to wash away sins. And all that His people need to do is to rest in His once for all completed work. But yet this covenant was not ratified, until Christ died. There had to be blood shed. There had to be a death brought, before it could begin. This has been true of all of God's covenants. And this was also true of this New Covenant. But what we will want to see this evening is that

The blood of Christ only needed to be shed once for our salvation.

I. First, and by way of a quick review of what we saw last week, the author says, “Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these” (v. 23a).

A. Why was it necessary?

1. Because according to the Law, “almost all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (v. 22).
2. The blood was a picture of Christ. But it was also a lesson that they needed to learn. Where there is sin, there must also be a death, blood must be shed, to remove that sin.
 - a. Its not that blood has some kind of special cleaning power which can remove sin, like Tide or some other laundry detergent can remove food stains.
 - b. No. It is God's justice that needs to be satisfied. God has been offended, and that offense needs to be removed. Justice needs to be paid. But the only thing that can justly remove sin is the death of the one who sinned, or the death of someone else in his place. Paul writes, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).
 - c. Sin costs something. Whenever you do something wrong, there is a payment that must be made, no matter how big or how small.
 - d. Children, if you break a lamp or a window, it costs something to fix it. Either you need to pay to fix it, or someone else does. Sometimes your parents will make you replace the things you break, when you are careless, to teach you to be more careful. But sometimes your parents will pay for it themselves, if you did it accidentally, if there was no way that you could have avoided it.

- e. But whoever fixes it, it still costs somebody something.
- f. The same thing is true of sin. Every sin that you commit is charged to your account. It is placed on your record by God. And He knows everything that you do wrong. He not only sees the wrong things you do, He also sees the right things that you don't do. But further yet, He also sees the thoughts and intentions of your heart. He knows whether they are good or bad, right or wrong. He knows whether it was love for Him that motivated you to do the good you did, or love for yourself. He hears every word which you say, no matter where you are. All of these things He keeps on record, because they are all committed against Him. He is keeping them for judgment day, when He will call you to account for each one of them. Jesus said, "And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).
- g. But what can remove it? What can take away my sins and free me from God's judgment on that day?
- h. The answer is blood. Blood has to be shed. A death must be brought.
- i. But if it is not to be your blood, it must be the blood of someone else. But who would take your place in God's judgment and shed His blood to release you from your sins? You know the answer: it is Christ Jesus. He was sent by the Father to come and ransom His people back from the judgment of God by paying justice Himself. And that is what He did.
- j. And if you are trusting in Him, all of your debts have been cancelled. God still knows what you did. And you still know what you did. And the memory of those things will cause you some measure of shame and humble you for the rest of your life. But God, because of Christ, has promised never to bring any of those many many sins against you in judgment on that day, nor for the rest of eternity.
- k. This is the lesson the shed blood is supposed to teach you. I hope that all of you, children included, have learned that lesson and have come to Christ for forgiveness.

B. The Old Covenant was ratified with the shedding of the blood.

- 1. It was able to make them ceremonially clean.
- 2. It was able to make the copy of the heavenly tabernacle acceptable to God for the rituals that the priest would be doing.
- 3. But it could not take away their sins.

II. But the main thrust of what he tells us in this passage comes in the next thing he says, "But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (v. 23b - 26).

- A. It was necessary for the copies to be cleansed with blood, but it was also necessary for the real tabernacle itself to be cleansed with better sacrifices.
 - 1. Now what does he mean by this? Is there something unclean about heaven that needs to be washed before Christ could minister in that heavenly Temple?
 - a. Yes and no. No, in that there is no sin in heaven. God could never dwell with sin in His presence. Isaiah writes, "For thus says the high and exalted

One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell *on* a high and holy place" (Isa. 57:15).

- b. This does not mean that there are never sinners around Him at all. After all, the rebellion of the angels appears to have taken place in heaven. And even after they were cast out, the devil appears to still have access to heaven. The rebellion took place very quickly, perhaps even within the creation week. But yet we read in Job 1:6, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them."
- c. Since God is so holy that no man can see His face and live, since he is a sinner, then this must be true of the demons as well. Even the seraphim who stand in His presence to worship Him cover their faces from His awful majesty (Isa. 6:2). Therefore God must reveal Himself in some form which allows them to present themselves before Him without being destroyed.
- d. But what is it that must be cleansed by the blood of Christ, before the New Covenant could begin?
- e. Well, don't forget what the New Covenant is: it is one of the several administrations of the Covenant of Grace. And what is the Covenant of Grace? It is that covenant which God made with Christ, and the elect in Christ, that He would become their surety, their guarantee that they would receive the blessings of the covenant. In other words, it is a redemptive covenant, a covenant which is meant to save man.
- f. But how will they be saved, if there is no blood shed? They have sinned. A death must be brought. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. Remember as well, that the blood of bulls and goats were not able to remove that sin.
- g. Well if they are to be saved, there must be blood shed. But that is what Christ did.
 - (i) He entered the heavenly tabernacle through His own blood to inaugurate this New Covenant.
 - (ii) God is seen sitting in heaven on His holy throne. It is here that the atonement needs to be brought to satisfy His justice. It is His holy wrath against sin that needs to be removed. Even the Old Covenant tabernacle showed them this. Where was the priest to place the blood of the atonement on the day of atonement? He was to place it on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. But what was the Holy of Holies? It was a picture of heaven, and the mercy seat was a picture of the throne of God in heaven. The earthly Tabernacle was a picture of the heavenly Temple where the Lord dwells. That sacrifice was a picture of Christ's blood which would one day be shed and presented in heaven to the Lord to satisfy His justice, so that mercy could be given. His blood established that covenant.
 - (iii) Now God may forgive sin without defiling heaven. The purification which Christ brings changes God's wrath in heaven towards man, into a smile of reconciliation (JFB). It is interesting that when Jesus was entering Jerusalem, and all the people were praising Him, that they said, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven

and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:38). They knew that the Messiah came to bring them back into God’s favor in heaven.

- (iv) But another wonderful thing happened when Christ offered Himself. Not only did He cleanse our sins away, but He also forever removed from the devil any ground to ever accuse us again. Remember what the author to the Hebrews said, “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Heb. 2:14-15). We were afraid of death because death was going to bring God’s final judgment upon us. But now that Jesus has removed our sins, He has also removed the sting of death. Paul writes, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:56-57).
 - (v) And since this takes place in the real Tabernacle in the real heaven, it represents the full and final stage of the Covenant of Grace. Christ has completed His work of redeeming man.
2. Christ entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us.
- a. His sacrifice established the New Covenant. But once Christ made that sacrifice, His work for us had only just begun.
 - b. Now Christ sits at God’s right hand as our Advocate.
 - (i) The priest only came before a Theophany of God. A theophany means that God makes Himself seen. God is invisible. You can’t see Him. But sometimes He would appear in a visible form.
 - (ii) Now even a visible appearance of God was something to be afraid of. When God appeared to Manoah and his wife as the angel of the Lord, Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God” (Jud. 13:22). And you can bet that the priest was afraid when he went into that tent once per year to offer the atonement, for if he didn’t do everything just right, he would be struck down by God.
 - (iii) But Christ didn’t appear in the presence of a Theophany like this. He is in the very presence of God. He sees God face to face. Literally, the Greek says that now He appears “in the face of God on our behalf” (v. 24). And yet He is not consumed, as God said to Moses, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live” (Ex. 33:20)! That which would consume man would be God’s wrath. But Christ is not under that wrath, for He is the spotless Lamb of God.
 - (iv) And He now stands before God, but not for Himself. He stands for us! He is our Advocate with the Father. John writes, “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Whenever we sin, Jesus defends us, and shows the Father His satisfaction for our sins. He shows Him His wounds, and His shed blood.
 - (v) Christ is the One who keeps us in the grace of God. And so the author to

the Hebrews writes, “Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25).

B. But this work which Christ did to give us all these blessings, He only had to do once. In verses 25-26, we read, “Nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

1. The high priest had to go in year after year. And everytime he did, he reminded the people that these sacrifices could not take away sins.
2. But Christ only had to die once.
 - a. He appeared once, at the end of the ages. The “end of the ages” means the consummation, the culmination, the climax of all the ages which came before His appearing. Everything which God revealed in the previous ages had to do with Christ.
 - b. And when He came, He fulfilled everything by the sacrifice of Himself.
 - c. And this He did by offering Himself once on the cross, for all time.
 - d. He didn’t need to come down several times to do this. Once was enough. You and I constantly need to renew our repentance and faith. Since we are sinners who are always sinning, we need to always be asking God to forgive us for Christ’s sake. But the reason we do is because we cannot perfectly repent of anything. We are imperfect and full of sin. But not Christ. Christ is perfect. But He is better than perfect, He is also infinite. He is both God and man. When Christ laid down His life to atone for sin, He made a sacrifice of limitless value. It is enough to cleanse a whole universe of sinful creatures and more. And so He only needed to be offered once. If He had been offered twice or a thousand times, it would not have been any more effective in removing sin than it already is.
 - e. Roman Catholicism teaches that whenever the Mass is celebrated, that is, whenever they serve the Lord’s Supper, that Christ is offered up again for the sins of the people. But you can see how false this is by looking at this passage. Christ died once for all time. He does not need to do so again. He has put away sin once and for all by His own blood.

III. Finally, Christ will appear one more time. But when He does, He will not bring our sin into account (vv. 27-28).

- A. The author says that “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment.”
- B. And then he makes this comparison between Christ and man, “So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”

To all men it is appointed to die only once (life after death experiences?)

So to Christ it is appointed to die only once.

After this there is judgment for man (at the judgment of the great day).

So Christ will appear again to judge all men.

Giving salvation to those who eagerly look to Him to bring it (quote looking for Christ passages).

Dealing out judgment to those who impenitently live in any sin.

after this the judgment — namely, at Christ's appearing, to which, in Hebrews 9:28, "judgment" in this verse is parallel. Not, "after this comes the heavenly glory." The intermediate state is a state of joyous, or else agonizing and fearful, expectation of "judgment"; after the judgment comes the full and final state of joy, or else woe.

28. Christ — Greek, "THE Christ"; the representative MAN; representing all men, as the first Adam did.

once offered — not "often," Hebrews 9:25; just as "men," of whom He is the representative Head, are appointed by God once to die. He did not need to die again and again for each individual, or each successive generation of men, for He represents all men of every age, and therefore needed to die but once for all, so as to exhaust the penalty of death incurred by all. He was offered by the Father, His own "eternal Spirit" (Hebrews 9:14) concurring; as Abraham spared not Isaac, but offered him, the son himself unresistingly submitting to the father's will (Genesis 22:1-24).

to bear the sins — referring to Isaiah 53:12, "He bare the sins of many," namely, on Himself; so "bear" means, Leviticus 24:15 Numbers 5:31 14:34. The Greek is literally "to bear up" (1 Peter 2:24). "Our sins were laid on Him. When, therefore, He was lifted up on the cross, He bare up our sins along with Him" [BENGEL].

many — not opposed to all, but to few. He, the One, was offered for many; and that once for all (compare Matthew 20:28).

look for him — with waiting expectation even unto the end (so the Greek). It is translated "wait for" in Romans 8:19,23 1 Corinthians 1:7, which see.

appear — rather, as Greek, "be seen." No longer in the alien "form of a servant," but in His own proper glory.

without sin — apart from, separate from, sin. Not bearing the sin of many on Him as at His first coming (even then there was no sin in Him). That sin has been at His first coming once for all taken away, so as to need no repetition of His sin offering of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). At His second coming He shall have no more to do with sin.

unto salvation — to bring in completed salvation; redeeming then the body which is as yet subject to the bondage of corruption. Hence, in Philippians 3:20 he says, “we look for THE SAVIOR.” Note, Christ’s prophetic office, as the divine Teacher, was especially exercised during His earthly ministry; His priestly is now from His first to His second coming; His kingly office shall be fully manifested at, and after, His second coming.