

Hebrews 9:24-28

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a handmade sanctuary, a representation of the true sanctuary. Instead, he entered into heaven itself, now to appear before God on our behalf. ²⁵ And he did not enter to offer himself many times, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise he would have needed to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once and for all, at the climax of the ages, in order to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And, just as it is appointed for people to die only once and after this comes the judgment, ²⁸ so also Christ was offered only once to take away the sins of many, and he will appear a second time—without sin—to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Dear children of God who live under the grace of the new covenant. Amen

Wouldn't it be nice if we lived in a world where we only had to do things once. Imagine the joy if we only had to paint our house once and never have to paint again or dust or vacuum your house once. Imagine if we only had to tell our children once to do their homework or pick up their rooms. Wouldn't it be so much more simple if we only had to buy clothes or shoes once and never have to worry about going back to buy new things. Think about how wonderful it would be if you only had to buy one car in your lifetime. Life would be far more easy if we only had to do things once, but this is not the case and it never will be the case. We will most often have to tell our children over and over to do their chores and homework. We will have to buy things over and over, because they wear out or we grow out of them. Nothing is so perfect in our world that we only need to do it once.

The world may not be perfect, today we are going to take a look at something that did happen only once and never has to be repeated. We are going to take a look at Jesus who came to this world and accomplished his work perfectly the first time. We will see from these words in the book of Hebrews that everything Jesus did was perfect and only needs to be done once. With this in mind, we realize that this is one of the most comforting teachings we have, because we never have to worry about whether or not Jesus' words and works are true. They are completely true and complete. Today we will look at these words from Hebrews and use the theme:

Sermon Theme: Jesus Is Our Perfect High Priest

- 1. He died once for the sins of the world**
- 2. He ascended once to intercede for us**
- 3. He will return once to bring us to heaven.**

Looking at these words from the book of Hebrews, we first of all need to take a look at the comparison that is being made. We need to see the picture of the Old Covenant given on Mt. Sinai to Moses and the New Covenant that was given to us through Jesus Christ on Mt. Calvary. Our text is

looking very closely at the fact that the Old Covenant was quite different from that of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was based on the laws that God gave through Moses to govern every aspect of the Israelites life – both for the governing of their daily lives and for their worship lives. Our text talks about some of the aspects of their worship lives.

Let's do just a simple review of Old Testament Israel's worship life. They worshiped in the tabernacle, the portable worship facility, and then later on in the temple in Jerusalem. In both places the Israelite were told specifically by God what they were supposed to do. The key element to their worship life was the sacrifices that they were to make to remind them of the fact that their sins needed to be paid for by the lifeblood of something. The Priests and High Priest were the ones who performed these sacrifices. The High Priest also performed the major ceremonies that were a part of the Israelites worship life. The High Priest was the middle person between God and his people. As God's representative the High performed many acts of worship on behalf of the people. One of those ceremonies was on the special day of the year called the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. On this day the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place in the temple or tabernacle and perform a ceremony, which would symbolize how God would save all sinners from their sins. In the Holy of Holies the Ark of Covenant stood to remind the people of Israel that God was with them. No one was to enter this room, except the High Priest and that was only once a year. The high Priest would sprinkle blood on the Ark of the Covenant to show that blood need to be shed for sins to be forgiven.

The reason that the High Priest needed to enter this Holy of Holies every year was because the High Priest and all of the sacrifices performed were not perfect. The High Priest was not perfect and most certainly the blood of the animals was not enough to take away sins, but our text tells us what was able to take away our sins. He says it multiple times. **“Christ was offered only once to take away the sins of many.”** and **“he has appeared once and for all, at the climax of the ages, in order to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”** Jesus is our perfect High Priest who came and sacrificed himself on the cross of Calvary once to take way the sins of the whole world. His blood was shed in the perfect Sacrifice. He doesn't need to be sacrificed again and again, **“And he did not enter to offer himself many times, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own.”** He took away our sins completely and paid the price to wipe away our guilt forever. We are covered by his blood. What assurance this is as we think about the fact Jesus died once and now as true God was able to rise again on the third day. Jesus is the Real High Priest.

We can find lots of comfort as we hear these words. There are some people who think that Jesus' death on the cross was not enough to save us. They think that they better try and help God out by living good lives and being good people. Some people have trouble believing that the forgiveness that Jesus won 2000 years ago is still good for us today, but we don't have to worry about these things. The payment to free us from our sin was made by the perfect High Priest who sacrificed himself once to save all people. We can be sure that all this is true and all of this is ours forever. This moves us to remember that Jesus did other things only once. He ascended into heaven once.

1. He Ascended Once To Intercede For Us

The High Priest did more than just offer sacrifices for the people. As he went into the Holy of Holies on that Day of Atonement, he went in on behalf of the people. He was to go into this room and intercede

for the people. He was God's representative working for the people. Jesus is like this for us as our perfect High Priest. After Jesus gave his life as the perfect sacrifice we are reminded that he showed his almighty power as he took up full use of his divine glory again. He showed this divine glory as he rose from the dead on the third day and 40 days later ascended into heaven. It tells us that he is now in heaven and is working on our behalf.

But how is Jesus working for us now that he is in heaven? When Jesus returned to heaven he didn't leave us or forget about us. He is in heaven pleading our case before our heavenly Father as he reminds us that his blood paid in full for all of our sins, **"he entered into heaven itself, now to appear before God on our behalf."** He ascended into heaven do this for us. With confidence in our hearts, we know that our ascended Lord is working for us and that our prayers offered to him are heard and brought before our heavenly Father. Secondly Jesus is in heaven preparing a place for us that will be ready for us when the time comes for God to bring us to our home in heaven. Jesus our ascended Savior has done this for us, and even more our text tells us that he will appear a second time to bring us to the place he prepared for us in heaven.

2. He Will Return Once To Bring Us To Heaven

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that our lives on this earth will not be forever. Jesus promises us that he will return, **"and he will appear a second time—without sin—to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him."** Today we are celebrating the Sunday of the Church year called Last Judgment. As we draw closer to the end of the Christian Church Year we want to draw our attention to the fact that God will one day come and judge all people -- ourselves included. The words of this text are meant to help us be ready and full of confidence and comfort for this great and glorious day. We don't know the day or hour of Jesus' return, but we do know that he will come again. Our text tells us this very fact as he says that he will come a second, but his time it will not be to take our sins away. Jesus' second coming will be to bring all those who believe to heaven and all those who don't believe will be sent away to hell where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When we look more closely at these words from Hebrews chapter nine, we notice his choice of words. He says that Jesus will come a second time and will bring salvation to us. This will be his second and final return. He doesn't say that he will be coming back a 3rd or 4th time in case we weren't ready the 2nd time. But with the knowledge of Jesus' sacrifice firmly rooted in our hearts we will always be ready. May we always remember to place our trust in Jesus who came as our perfect High Priest. Today we have looked at the Old Covenant of Mt Sinai and the High Priest and his work during the Old Covenant.

Today we also looked more closely at the perfect forgiveness that was won for us as Jesus died once for the sins of all people for all times. As we compare the Old and the New Covenant we realize that the New Covenant is better because it offers the perfect answer to our sins. The Old Covenant had its place as it kept the people of Israel focused on the perfect High Priest, Jesus, who would come and bring the final sacrifice, but it was only a shadow of the real sacrifice that Jesus made. May we also draw comfort from all the things that Jesus did only once as he died once – ascended once and will return once to bring us to heaven. Amen