

A FAR BETTER HOPE (vv. 27-28)

²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

1. The contrast in verses 27 and 28 is between the ultimate destiny of all people and the ultimate destiny of those who are in Christ.
 1. What is the ultimate destiny of humanity as a whole?
 2. What is the ultimate destiny of those who are in Christ?
2. There is also a contrast between Christ's first appearing and his second appearing.
 1. What did Christ accomplish when he appeared the first time?
 2. What will he accomplish when "he appears a second time?"
3. We usually think of our salvation in past tense—we have been saved (perfect past, actually). There is also a present tense—we are being saved, and a future tense "Christ will bring salvation to all who are waiting on him." What is it that Christ will bring to us when he appears?
4. The writer of Hebrews describes believers as those who are waiting on him. What do you think it means to wait on his appearing? How would a radical refocus on our coming salvation impact the way we live in the present?

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LOOK TO JESUS

ONCE FOR ALL | HEBREWS 9:23-28

We have been talking a lot about priests, the tabernacle and sacrifice. All of these are relics of a far too distant (and all too weird) past for us, but for Jewish Christians they stood at the very heart of their understanding of who God was and how we relate to him. The book of Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians who are having a hard time letting go of the past. It is hard for us to grasp how deeply the gospel shattered their categories and challenged their world view.

Tim Keller invites us to imagine how a first century christian might describe their faith to one of their neighbors.

"You're a Christian?" "Yeah" "Where's your temple?" they'd ask. The Christians would reply that they didn't have a temple. "But how could that be? Where do your priests labor?" The Christians would have replied that they didn't have priests. "But ... but," the neighbors would have sputtered, "where are the sacrifices made to please your gods?" The Christians would have responded that they did not make sacrifices anymore.

Jesus himself was the temple to end all temples, the priest to end all priests, and the sacrifice to end all sacrifices (The Prodigal God).

The writer of Hebrews takes those Old Testament images and turns them on their head. He tells us, Jesus enter a far better sanctuary through a far better sacrifice securing for us a far better hope.

A FAR BETTER SANCTUARY (vv. 23-24)

²³ *It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* ²⁴ *For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

1. In verses 23-24 the writer of Hebrews draws a sharp distinction between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary.
 - a. What are some of the key differences?
 - b. What do you think it means for the earthly sanctuary to be a copy of the heavenly sanctuary?
 - c. What is significant about the fact that the heavenly sanctuary is not made with human hands?
 - d. What, if any, are the similarities between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary?
2. While our only exposure to the blood of the covenant is a small cup of grape juice we sip on at communion, the reality of blood was far more central to worship in the tabernacle. The writer of Hebrews reminds us:

¹⁸ *This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.*

¹⁹ *When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.* ²⁰ *He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."* ²¹ *In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.* ²² *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (9:18-22)*

He tells us virtually everything is cleansed with blood—both sanctuary and people alike.

- a. Why was blood central to worship in the earthly sanctuary?
 - b. What role does it play in worship in the heavenly sanctuary?
 - c. What in the heavenly sanctuary would need to be cleansed by blood?
4. According to verse 24, why did Christ enter the heavenly sanctuary?
5. What do you think it means for Christ "to appear for us in God's presence?"

A FAR BETTER SACRIFICE (vv. 25-26)

²⁵ *Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.*

²⁶ *Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

1. In verses 25 and 26, the contrast is between the annual sacrifice offered by the high priest in the Most Holy Place, and the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross.
 - a. What are the major differences between the two?
 - b. Why do these differences make a real difference?
2. The phrase the NIV translates "the culmination of the ages" is translated "the end of the ages" in the ESV. While the phrase does refer to the final age, it also has the nuance of "completion," "fulfilling a purpose" or "reaching a goal?" The thought is that Christ's death on the cross inaugurates the final and climatic stage of redemptive history.
 - a. How does redemptive history find its fulfillment in Christ?
 - b. What does it mean for us to live in the age of fulfillment?