

ONCE OFFERED AND ACCEPTED

Hebrews 9:23–28 — *"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*

In discussing the tabernacle, as we did in the first part of this chapter, it is a contrast between the pattern and the better reality that it was representing. Theologians call this *typology*.

It is important, before diving in to typology, to remember not to use it to change the clear meaning of a text to undo what the scriptures are teaching where they are teaching it. We do not aim to change the Bible to mean whatever tickles our fancy for that day, or to invalidate in our minds God's Word³⁰.

There are things in the Bible that are clearly said to be types. The tabernacle, as Moses was instructed to build in Exodus, is said to be a type of the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" (9:11), which is "not made with hands", understood to mean, not by mere men.

Moses was given strict instructions on how to build the first tabernacle, and of what materials it was to be built from. In chapter 8, we learn of the priests that "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things", and then we read Jehovah's instructions to Moses on the tabernacle:

"See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount"
(Hebrews 8:5, c.f. Exodus 25:40).

Now the patterns were purified. They had to be made holy and "meet for the master's use" by a ritual cleansing. We learned the truth of Jesus Christ as the better priest of better things to come, and here we are learning of the better tabernacle in which He brings us to worship God. The blood of bulls and of goats was used to purify the holy places made with hands. The patterns were holy things because God declared them to be such, not because there was any intrinsic holiness within them. The bulls and goats, while necessarily without blemish and spot, were also not holy in themselves, but as the people followed the law as God told them, God looked on it as a purification, that was a type of a true and lasting purification that "obtained eternal redemption for us" (9:12).

The patterns on earth could be ritually purified by the blood of calves and of goats and the ashes of a heifer, with the scarlet wool and water and all, but those would not suffice to purify the heavenly tabernacle. It took the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, the High Priest Himself, to prepare the better abode in Heaven where God will meet and commune with His people eternally.

³⁰ We cannot invalidate God's Word, but we can in our flesh negate its effect on us by telling ourselves that it doesn't mean what it clearly does mean, it just doesn't fit our theology.

In John chapter 14, we read of the Lord telling His eleven remaining disciples about His Father's house and that He was going to prepare a place for them:

John 14:2–3 — *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

While it is often asserted that this is speaking of His ascension, and then a still future return, it is better seen contextually speaking of His death — for that is where He was going — and His resurrection, where He would come again and receive them to Himself. In John 14 we see Jesus speaking of going to prepare a place in His Father's house by going to the cross. In Hebrews 9, we see that is what He did. There would be no place in the Father's house for anyone without His going away as He said in John 14 as a future accomplishment. It is a past completed and perfect accomplishment in Hebrews 9.

As Christ died for our sins to bear them as the propitiation, His blood also provides the purification for the place where He will bring us to live with Him. Now, it isn't Heaven that so much needs purification as such, but Heaven as a place for us. And Christ, as High Priest, being the one mediator between God and man, (1 Timothy 2:5), appears in the presence of God for us as High Priest making intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34). He is advocate with the Father when we sin, not as constantly pleading our cause, but that His presence at the right hand of the Father is the advocacy that we need. As long as He has a place at the right hand of the Father, our place is secure, and eternally purged.

When we get to verse 25, we are reassured that this is not an ongoing need of a continuously repeating sacrifice, as the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kipper, was under the Old Mosaic Covenant. That high priest, from Aaron onward, had to use the blood of a substitute, a goat chosen as the sin-offering, to be the yearly atonement.

Here we learn that Christ as the better Priest is also the better sin-offering, not to mention the better cleansing and He who accomplished all requirements for us. The Old Testament high priests could not offer their own blood. It was not qualified. They had to do things as required by the Law as God gave it. While their office as priests was cleansed, not one high priest could offer his own life for the people. It would suffice nothing.

But Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who is the surety and mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises, who is also the testator of that covenant, meaning as said previously, He bears witness to that covenant. It was His blood that established that covenant, and now that blood of the New Covenant was shed for many for the remission of sins, (Matthew 26:28), the job is done. On the cross the Savior cried "It is finished" (John 19:30), and we learn all that was finished later. The old covenant law, was finished. The handwriting of ordinances that was contrary to us was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

If His offering was simply an extension of the OT priesthood, or the establishment of a new religion, it would indeed have to be repeated. In verse 26 we read the continuing thought from verse 25, *"Nor yet that He should offer Himself often ... for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world"*. Had a continuing sacrifice or offering been needed, it would have continually been happening in order for all of the people of old to have a standing before God. The "types and shadows" of the past were sufficient to cover them until the propitiation (Romans 3:25) was made for their sins to be

remitted. The proof that Christ's sacrifice was a completed one-time accomplishment and not a temporary atonement was that it wasn't going on from the foundation of the world but was made at a moment in time. It was made when God sent forth His Son "in the fulness of the time" (Galatians 4:4), and He offered Himself once — once for all.

The contrast is that Christ appeared once — in the end of the world. This "end of the world"³¹ in this context is the end of the world of the Old Testament, or we would understand it as synonymous with the fulness of the time as said in Galatians. This was the time that God planned to end the time of the types and the shadows and bring in eternal redemption and eternal salvation and eternal inheritance. He did it by the perfect offering and sacrifice that He offered once.

Verse 27 continues the thought:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..."

Notice how often this verse is quoted and used in a completely different context. It is used in a context that is totally true, but we must acknowledge its proper context.

Men only die once. Therefore, Jesus' offering of Himself as man only could happen once. It is evaluated after that offering and it is not to be repeated. It is after this that the final evaluation will be made. Back in chapter 5, we read this:

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared: though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him..." — Hebrews 5:7–9

That was the judgment made. He completed the work. Verse 28 continues saying that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. This does not limit who He bore the sins of but contrasts it to one who could bear the sins of only one or a few. His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. In other places we read that "by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life", Romans 5:18. The next verse, Romans 5:19, we read that "by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous." By changing to many it is not limiting the availability of the gift but contrasting it to the "One" who accomplished it. In 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, we have:

*"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if **one died for all**, then were all dead: And that he **died for all**, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."*

³¹ "end of the world" here is the same phrasing as in Matthew 24:3 speaking of the coming of the Son of Man as conquering Christ. It is a similar phrasing in Greek as well. But it is obvious from what is being spoken of that it is not about the same thing. In Hebrews 9 it is about the end of all things regarding the Old Covenant and in Matthew 24 it is about the coming judgment and subsequent reign of Christ as King of kings. The same word, and even the same phrase can mean something totally different depending on its context. Word and phrase studies have value, but they are limited in what they show regarding the meaning of something in Scripture. Sometimes we need to get the "bird's eye view" first before digging in to the details for interpretation. What is the verse or passage talking about must be taken in to account.

It is true that all do not receive Him, and therefore all do not partake of the benefits of His death for them, but this does not take away from the fact that He died for all. Even John Calvin had to say this when commenting on Romans 5:18:

“He makes this favor common to all, because it is propounded to all, and not because it is in reality extended to all; for though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God's benignity indiscriminately to all, yet all do not receive him³².”

This also is impressed in Romans 3:22 where the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is “unto all, and upon all them that believe”. No one is out of the reach of the grace of God, yet the grace of God is only effective in giving righteousness to all them that believe. His righteousness is upon all that believe, or that have faith in Jesus Christ.

And these are they that look for Him, as verse 28 and the chapter comes to a close. An important aspect of believing in Him is to believe that He is coming again — the second time. The clear witness of Scripture is that He will. It will be the same Jesus that the apostles saw leaving in Acts 1. It will be the same Jesus that appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, who after seeing that and living a life of ministry for Him was still looking for Him to come the second time. He would be coming to save His own. He would be coming the second time “without sin unto salvation.”

The Christian's calling now in this world is told us in Titus chapter 2:

Titus 2:11–14 — “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Not to say that wrong ideas about the second coming of Christ would make one not a Christian, and therefore not saved, but it is antithetical to Christian doctrine to deny His coming again.

The sacrifice of Christ for sin was a once for all sacrifice. His job of doing it is done. This epistle opens saying that He “by Himself purged our sins” and that He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). He is seated because the work is done. Now we rest in Him and live as His.

³² <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/romans/5.htm>. There is a footnote here from the editor that says “It appears from this sentence that Calvin held general redemption.” Not a very consistent Calvinist.