

#1801  
Cf. #850

Hebrews 9:24-28<sup>1</sup>  
Man dies once, then judgment;  
but Christ took away the sins of all.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Last Sunday of Reformation &  
Endtime – Sunday of the  
Last Judgment  
Supplementary Lectionary  
Series “B,” Epistles

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Confirmation: Matthew D. Van Epps  
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<sup>24</sup> For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary [that is, the Most Holy Place] that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. <sup>25</sup> Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the [Old Testament] High Priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own [that is, the blood of sacrificial animals – bulls & goats]. <sup>26</sup> Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup> Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face Judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was sacrificed once for all to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him [that is, for believers].

THERE IS ONLY ONCE ...  
I. ONCE MAN FELL INTO SIN AND DEATH  
II. ONCE CHRIST REDEEMED MANKIND  
III. ONCE CHRIST COMES A SECOND TIME

In the Name of Jesus our Savior and Redeemer,

In the Scripture Lessons from the Book of Hebrews this morning (Hebrews 9:1-23), you heard a brief description of some of the Old Testament requirements for worship. This worship took place in the Tabernacle or Tent that was constructed at the time of Moses, and, later, this worship continued in the Temple that was built by King Solomon, as well as in the later Temple constructed by King Herod.

In the Tabernacle and Temple, there were daily functions. Sacrifices were offered. The wicks of the seven-tiered candlestick in the Holy Place [ {Agia, vd, Qoh' } ] were

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

trimmed every day. Every day incense was offered on the Altar of Incense, which stood right in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies [ {Agia JAgivwn,  $\mu y v i d ; Q \tilde{O} h ' v d , q o$ ]. Each Sabbath Day the twelve loaves of the “Bread of the Presence,” were replaced. Then something special took place once-a-year.

Once-a-year on the Day of Atonement [yom kippur -  $\mu y r i P u K i h ' \mu / y$ ] the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place – the Holy of Holies. There was only one piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place: The Ark of the Covenant. (If any of you have seen *Indiana Jones and the Lost Ark*, you have some idea of what this Ark looked like.)

The Ark of the Covenant was a rectangular box, inlaid gold. It contained a jar of manna from the time of Moses; it contained Aaron’s staff, which budded, blossomed, indicating that Aaron and his descendants were to be the Priests, who ministered, served, at the Tabernacle and Temple; the Ark contained the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments. The lid of this Ark of the Covenant had two golden cherubim – angels – facing each other, with their wings touching. This lid was called “the mercy seat” [tr, PoK', tov iJlathvrion]. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement [yom kippur -  $\mu y r i P u K i h ' \mu / y$ ] the High Priest entered this Most Holy Place – the Holy of Holies [ {Agia JAgivwn,  $\mu y v i d ; Q \tilde{O} h ' v d , q o$ ].

The High Priest entered the Most Holy Place only once-a-year on the Day of Atonement [yom kippur -  $\mu y r i P u K i h ' \mu / y$ ]. First, the High Priest entered with incense taken from the Altar of Incense in front of the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. The smoke from the incense would hide to a certain extent the Ark of the Covenant, otherwise, the High Priest would be struck down by God. The High Priest entered the Most Holy Place a second time with the blood of a sacrificial bull. This blood was to make atonement for the sins of the High Priest. This blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant. The High Priest entered the Most Holy Place a third time; this time with the blood of a sacrificial goat to make atonement for the sins of the people. This blood too was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. For it was only through blood that the mercy and grace of God would come to people.

Year after year on the Day of Atonement this ritual took place. The fact that this ritual took place yearly, was an indication that the ritual itself did not atone for sin – did not take away sin. Rather, this ritual on the Day of Atonement pointed ahead to the one perfect blood-sacrifice for sin: The blood of Jesus poured out on the cross once for all. So we see that

... THERE IS ONLY ONCE ... I. ONCE MAN FELL INTO SIN AND DEATH; II. ONCE CHRIST REDEEMED MANKIND; and, III. ONCE CHRIST COMES A SECOND TIME.

THERE IS ONLY ONCE ...  
I. ONCE MAN FELL INTO SIN AND DEATH

The writer to the Hebrews states, “man is destined to die once” (9:27a). The reason for this death that all people face, is sin.

God warned Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16b&17). Adam and Eve freely chose to ignore this Word of God. “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Genesis 3:6). The result was as God warned: Death came into the world.

St. Paul writes, “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Sin entered the world, because all mankind descended from sinful Adam and Eve. Moses records, “Adam ... had a son in his own likeness, in his own image” (Genesis 5:3). God’s image of holiness, righteousness, perfection and sinlessness was lost (cf. Genesis 1:27; 5:1b; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). The image of mankind was now sin followed by death, for “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a). Because all are sinners, all must die.

APPROPRIATION

There is no great revelation here, is there? All of us must die once. We might, however, try to weasel, wiggle and squirm away from the reason that we must to die. That reason is sin. You and I are sinners. We are not perfect as God demands.

St. Paul says in the Third Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans,

<sup>10</sup> ...  
**“There is no one righteous, not even one;  
<sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.  
<sup>12</sup> All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one.”**

.....

<sup>22</sup> .... ***There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

God's Word leaves no wiggle-room. It does not matter how good you are or think you are, you are not perfect as God demands. Therefore you must die. This is true for you, for me, for all.

All of us are sinful from the time we are conceived in the bellies of our mothers. King David confessed, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). At the time before and after the flood, God looked down on mankind and said, "Every inclination of the thoughts of [mankind's] heart [is] only evil all the time .... evil from childhood" (cf. Genesis 6:5b & 8:21b). We see this readily and easily in our children and grandchildren.

Is it not remarkable, that we do not have to teach our children how to sin? They come by it naturally. The same is true for you and me. God's Law serves as a mirror for us that we may see clearly our sinful condition. The Apostle Paul wrote,

***<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore no one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of sin*** (Romans 3:19&20).

Regardless of whether we have and know God's Law in the Bible or merely have within us a sense of right and wrong, the fact that we do and think wrong makes us conscious of the fact that we are sinners. The Law shows us our sin. Death is the result of sin.

Sin brings death. You and I and our children and our grandchildren must die; therefore we are sinners. This is the case because Adam and Eve fell once and brought sin into the world. But deliverance from sin has also taken place once and only once.

## THERE IS ONLY ONCE ... II. ONCE CHRIST REDEEMED MANKIND

When Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden and brought upon themselves and all mankind the curse of sin and death, God also promised deliverance from sin. The LORD God said to the devil, who had successfully tempted Adam and Eve, "... I will put enmity [a hostile relationship] between you and the woman, and between your offspring [seed, descendant] and hers [seed and descendant]; he [the offspring, seed, descendant of the woman] will crush your head [Satan], and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). This is the first Gospel promise in the Bible [the Protevangel]. This Gospel promise is fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

Our text states, “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people” (9:28a). The “many people” whose sins have been taken away by Jesus are all the descendants of Adam and Eve – the entire human race. John the Baptizer testifies to this truth when he points to Jesus and says, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (cf. John 1:29b,36b). Again, the Apostle John speaks this truth when he says, “Jesus Christ, the Righteous One ... is the Atoning Sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1b&2). The Apostle Peter proclaims this truth in his First Epistle: “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous” (1 Peter 3:18a). Jesus sacrificed himself for the sins of all – once for all – on the cross. Furthermore, the writer to the Hebrews compares Jesus’ sacrifice with the rituals of the Old Testament.

Our text states, “Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary [that is, the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, {Agia Ἱεράγίον, *μυριδικ; οὐρανὸς ἅγιος*} that was only a copy of the true one; [Christ Jesus] entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence” (9:24). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement [yom kippur - *μυριδική μ/ε*] the Old Testament High Priest entered the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple. The High Priest went into the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies) where sat the Ark of the Covenant. That Ark of the Covenant was, however, only a symbolic representation of God’s presence. Jesus entered into the very presence of God. The writer to the Hebrews further explains.

“Nor did [Jesus] enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the [Old Testament] High Priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own [that is, the blood of sacrificial animals – bulls & goats]” (9:25). Remember that year after year on the Day of Atonement [yom kippur - *μυριδική μ/ε*] the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place – the Holy of Holies. First he entered with burning incense from the Altar of Incense in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Then we went out and came back with the blood of a bull for his own sin, which he sprinkled on the cover of the Ark – the Mercy Seat. Then he went out again and came back with the blood of a goat for the sins of the people, which he also sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. Christ Jesus, however, did this once for all.

The writer to the Hebrews says,

***<sup>25</sup> Nor did [Christ Jesus] enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the [Old Testament] High Priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own [that is, the blood of sacrificial animals – bulls & goats]. <sup>26</sup> Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (9:25&26).***

Jesus entered the very presence of God with his own blood. If Jesus' sacrifice on the cross had not been enough to take away the sins of the world, then Jesus would have had to sacrifice himself many times. That is not the case; Jesus took away the sins of the world once for all. [This, by the way, is part of the false doctrine taught and practiced by the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism teaches that in the Mass – their Holy Communion – the priest offers up again and again the body and blood of Christ as an unbloody sacrifice for sin – again, and again, and again – every time Mass is celebrated. This is contrary to what the Scripture is teaching us: “Christ died for sins once for all” (1 Peter 3:18a).]

Christ Jesus appeared once for all to take away sin. There is no more offering for sin – no more sacrifice for sin – that is needed. St. Paul writes to the Colossians,

**<sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in ... your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross** (cf. Colossians 2:13&14).

Christ nailed the written code – God's Commandments, Regulations, Decrees, Statutes – Christ nailed all of them to the cross, thus taking away and nullifying those Commandments, Regulations, Decrees, and Statutes that were opposed to mankind and that convicted mankind of sins. Sin was nailed to the cross with Jesus. Jesus died; sin died; sin taken away. This was done without any merit, work, effort or character by anyone in the world. Only Jesus took away the sins of the world by his suffering and death on the cross. This is the way in which Jesus redeemed the world.

To redeem something means to buy it back with ransom price. The Apostle Peter describes the ransom price that Jesus paid. Peter says, “You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect” (cf. 1 Peter 1:18,19; cf. John 1:29b&36b; 1 John 2:1b&2; 1 Peter 3:18a). Jesus' blood is so holy, precious and valuable because it is the blood of Jesus true God and true man. Jesus is the God-man. This is what it took to redeem the world. This is what it took to redeem you and me.

#### APPROPRIATION

Only once did Christ Jesus redeem mankind – redeem you and me from sin, death and hell. Yet, the natural inclination of man – our inclination too – is that we have to do something to earn this redemption. This is the basic teaching of Roman Catholicism – that a person is saved by faith and good works. So many other so-called Christian churches teach the same thing. They are so-called Christian churches because they depart from this central teaching of the Bible that Christ Jesus died for sins once for all, and that it is by faith alone in him – faith without works – that a person has eternal life in heaven (cf. Ephesians 2:8&9). Whenever works are added to faith alone, then the Bible is being contradicted.

Listen again to our text: “[Christ] appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26b). Again our text states, “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people” (9:28a) – and, we have already seen that the “many people” referred to are all of the family and descendants of Adam and Eve – all people. Christ alone is the all-sufficient ransom price for the sins of the world, and it is only by faith in Christ that you and I benefit from Jesus’ redeeming work.

By faith alone in Jesus, without any works or merit or effort on our part – by faith alone in Jesus, we have the benefit of the forgiveness of sins, and that benefit is eternal life in heaven with Jesus. Thus we join in singing the hymn verses penned by Augustus M. Toplady:

2  
Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy Law’s demands.  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save and Thou alone.

3  
Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly –  
Wash me, Savior, or I die!  
(CW 389:2&3)<sup>2</sup>

Christ Jesus came the first time in humility to suffer and die and to take away the sins of the world. Jesus will come again – but, again, only once.

THERE IS ONLY ONCE ...  
III. ONCE CHRIST COMES A SECOND TIME

Christ Jesus is coming again. Our text states, “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face Judgment” (9:27). Everyone dies once. This death is a physical death – the separation of body and soul. Judgment then takes place. If there has been unbelief and rejection of Jesus, then the soul is in hell. If, by God’s grace, faith in Jesus has been created in the heart by the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, then the soul is in heaven. This takes place at the moment a person dies in this world. Jesus illustrated these truths in his parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus (cf. Luke 16:19-31).

In that parable, Jesus said,

**<sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar [a believer] died, and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side [in heaven]. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In hell, where [the rich man, unbeliever] was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side (Luke 16:22&23).**

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<sup>2</sup> *Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal, Authorized by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993)

The beggar Lazarus was a believer. Immediately when he died, his soul was in heaven. The rich man was an unbeliever. Immediately when he died, his soul was in the torment of hell. Moreover, concerning the fact that as soon as a believer dies physically, he or she is with Jesus in heaven, Jesus told the criminal on the cross who confessed his faith in Jesus, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). We do not know if that criminal's body was buried or thrown somewhere on a garbage heap. We do know that as a believer in Jesus, that criminal was in heaven with Jesus that very day. The same thing is true for every believer in Jesus. When a believer in Jesus dies, the soul of that believer is in heaven with Jesus. Then, there comes the resurrection of the dead.

Our text states, "[Christ Jesus] will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him [that is, salvation for believers]" (9:28b). On that Last Day, Jesus will raise all the dead and give eternal life to all who have been brought to faith in him through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. Jesus promised, "A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice [that is, the voice of the Son of man, Jesus] and come out" (John 5:28b,29a; cf. Daniel 12:2). Those who have believed in Jesus will have eternal life. Those who have not believed in him will exist in eternal damnation. Jesus said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Therefore, those who believe in Jesus now eagerly await Jesus' Second Coming.

#### APPROPRIATION

In a few minutes at the confirmation of Matthew Van Epps, we will join in confessing our Holy Christian faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed.<sup>3</sup> In that creed we will say, "I believe in ... the resurrection of the body." That resurrection will take place when Christ comes only once again on Judgment Day. Our text states that "[Christ Jesus] will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him [that is, salvation for believers]" (9:28b). Are you eagerly awaiting Jesus' return in Judgment?

Are you eagerly awaiting Jesus' return in Judgment on the Last Day? That question ought to cause you some apprehension. Earlier in this Book to the Hebrews, the writer said, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (4:13). Are you eager to give an account to God for yourself – for all of your thoughts, words, actions, attitudes and behavior, throughout your entire life? No? Neither am I. Except in this one thing.

There is only one way in which you and I will stand on Judgment Day before Christ, and that is by faith alone in Jesus as our Redeemer and Savior. That faith has been created in your heart and mine through the Gospel or Good News about Jesus in Word and Sacraments.

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<sup>3</sup> *Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal, Authorized by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), pp. 19, 41, 146, 150.

In Holy Baptism, we were made children of God and heirs of eternal life. In Holy Communion, we receive the body and blood of Christ Jesus our Savior – in, with and under bread and wine – for the forgiveness of all our sins. As we continue in Jesus' Word, the Bible, as we hear it, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, our faith in Jesus alone is strengthened and increased. In that faith, indeed, we eagerly await Jesus' Second Coming to take us to heaven in both body and soul.

## CONCLUSION

There is only once. Once mankind – Adam and Eve – fell into sin and brought sin and death upon all mankind. Once and only once, Jesus came into the world and offered up his perfect life and his holy precious blood as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves that he has taken away the sins of all. Only once again, Jesus will come on the Last Day, Judgment Day, to take believers to himself in heaven in both body and soul. By God's grace, you and I have been brought to faith in Jesus and now look forward eagerly to Jesus' Second Coming. Amen.