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Sermon Notes

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Once for All: Christ's Perfect Sacrifice the Goal of History

Hebrews 9:23-28

Reincarnation: Eastern religion's most famous contribution to Western thought... the growing popularity of the concept of reincarnation... the basic idea is that the soul/spirit, after the death of the body, comes back to life in a new form... either as an animal or anything that is living; it posits a repeating cycle of rebirth, life, death, and rebirth again... life more like a big circle than a line

It is a pillar doctrine in both Buddhism and Hinduism; in the sacred Hindu Scripture the Bhagavad Gita, it is written:

Worn-out garments are shed by the body; Worn-out bodies are shed by the dweller within the body. New bodies are donned by the dweller, like garments. (2:22)

And the concept of reincarnation has been slowly but steadily making its way into American consciousness and even into American churches!

Oprah Winfrey has had a number of people on her show espousing belief in reincarnation; Sylvester Stallone believes in it; Actress Shirley Maclain wrote in a book,

"Reincarnation is like show business, you just keep on doing it until you get it right."

According to a survey done by the Pew Foundation in 2009, 24% of American Christians expressed a belief in reincarnation!! An earlier survey showed 31% of European Catholics believed in reincarnation!

In today's passage, however, we have the clear teaching of Scripture:

Hebrews 9:27 man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

This one statement disproves reincarnation... the teaching of the Bible is that human life and history is LINEAR... it has a beginning, a middle and an end; and at the end of life comes DEATH and after death comes JUDGMENT

One verse in the Bible! One single verse... it also disproves atheistic materialism, which states that life is nothing more than chemical processes that end at death; NO... this ONE VERSE teaches that there is something AFTER DEATH... namely judgment. And

this ONE VERSE in the Bible also teaches us that JUDGMENT DAY follows death for everyone... we must all give God an account of our lives

But actually... this one verse was not written primarily to teach these facts... actually, I just gave you a fragment of the verse... the whole verse is itself only a sentence fragment. To get the whole thought, we need TWO VERSES:

Hebrews 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once 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 waiting for him.

The verse isn't primarily about man's linear experience and his fate; rather it is primarily about JESUS CHRIST... His ONCE FOR ALL sacrifice for sins that prepares sinners like you and me for judgment day that will most certainly follow death

I. The Necessity of Purification (vs. 23)

Hebrews 9:23 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.

A. The Necessity of Purification Stated Plainly

1. Strong word in the Greek: "It was NECESSARY..."
2. Implies a legal requirement... "It is REQUIRED BY LAW that..."
3. Simply put, God commanded the sprinkling of blood referred to in vs. 18-22
4. To obey the will of God meant this purification ritual

B. Go Deeper: God's Character Requires It

1. All that is simple enough... "God commands it, that settles it"
2. BUT we need to go deeper... God's character AND our character requires purification
3. God's perfect holiness is the central lesson of Scripture

Isaiah 6:3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

4. Our defiling sinfulness is the second major theme (vs. 27)

Isaiah 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Isaiah 1:15-17 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; ¹⁶ wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, ¹⁷ learn to do right!

Romans 1:29-31 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

5. Therefore, our great need is purification from sin's defilement in order to dwell in the presence of God

Leviticus 11:44 I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

C. Copies Had to Be Purified

1. The Author speaks of the COPIES of the heavenly things
2. This refers to the artifacts of the Old Covenant sacrificial system mentioned in these chapters: the tabernacle, the ark, the scroll, the altar, everything used in the animal sacrificial system
3. They are called COPIES, or TYPES, or SHADOWS (vs. 24)
4. The earthly, human tabernacle was built by human hands out of earthly materials
5. The message is clear: Everything we humans touch we defile... even our most sacred things, even those things God Himself commanded us to do, are still defiled... our best works need ATONEMENT

D. With Animal Blood: "it was necessary that the copies be cleansed with THESE SACRIFICES..."

1. The provision of the Old Covenant for purification was ANIMAL BLOOD

2. God provided the blood of bulls and calves and goats to effect a ceremonial cleansing from sin

3. They were effective for that, but only for that

E. Amazingly: The Heavenly Things Needed to Be Purified

1. The Author then shocks us by saying that IT WAS ALSO NECESSARY to purify the heavenly realities

2. How? With “better sacrifices than these...” [why plural??]

3. Why?

a. Option #1: “Heaven was defiled with God's wrath in dealing with sin”... NO

b. Option #2: “Satan’s rebellion defiled heaven”... NO

c. Option #3: Heavenly sanctuary had to be INAUGURATED or CONSECRATED (John Owen)... Okay... but “purified” is not the best word for this action

d. Option #4: We are God’s sanctuary... (Ephesians 2, 1 Peter 2), and we clearly had to be purified

e. Option #5 (best answer): New Heaven/New Earth; God’s people, the “home of righteousness” had to be made ready through a better cleansing sacrifice; in some sense the entire universe is defiled with sin, and only by a superior sacrifice could the entire universe—heaven and earth—be rid of the defilement of sin

II. The Superiority of Sacrifice: Christ Himself (vs. 23)

Hebrews 9:23 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.

A. The Author is Comparing Christ to Animals

1. Christ sacrifice is SUPERIOR to that offered under the Old Covenant

B. Points of Comparison

1. “Better sacrifices than these...”

2. “Blood of bulls and goats” (10:4) vs. “Himself” (vs. 26)

3. “Blood that is not his own” (9:25) vs. “His own blood”

Hebrews 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

C. Infinitely Valuable, Infinitely Effective

1. The awesome value of the blood of Christ
2. The awesome effectiveness of the blood of Christ

D. Effective to Purify Sinners Perfectly

1 Peter 1:18-22 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. ²² ¶ Now that you have PURIFIED yourselves by obeying the truth

E. So, Christ's Sacrifice is Superior!!

III. The Superiority of Place: Heaven Itself (vs. 24)

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

A. The First Covenant: A Man-Made Sanctuary

Hebrews 9:1-2 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ² A tabernacle was set up.

Hebrews 9:11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

B. Called a "Copy and Shadow" of What is In Heaven (Hebrews 8:5)

C. Christ Did NOT Enter the Man-Made Copy

D. Christ DID Enter **Heaven Itself**

1. No earthly priest, covered as they all were in sin, could have done this
 - a. It wasn't physically possible
 - b. It wasn't spiritually possible either!

2. The exalted privilege of the Son of God Himself... total and free access to God Himself
3. Heaven is the place of Almighty God... depicted in Scripture powerfully in these terms:

Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place

Psalm 113:4-6 The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, ⁶ who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

Isaiah 40:22-23 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

1 Timothy 6:16 who lives in unapproachable light

- E. Christ Appeared for Us in this High, Holy Place... Infinitely Superior to the Earthly, Man-Made Tent Where the Levitical Priests Made their Offerings
- F. Solomon Had a Sense of the Inferiority of Even the Glorious Gold Temple He Built
- G. Stephen Proclaimed this Inferiority Plainly

Acts 7:47-50 it was Solomon who built the house for him. ⁴⁸ "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: ⁴⁹ "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? ⁵⁰ Has not my hand made all these things?"

H. Christ Appeared IN HEAVEN **FOR US!!!**

1. He appeared before the holy and exalted throne of God
2. He appeared ON OUR BEHALF... to plead the merits of His blood
3. This message was to wean the Jews off of consideration of the greatness of their TEMPLE

Jeremiah 7:4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!"

Mark 13:1 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

4. Instead to consider the greatness of Christ's accomplishment... appearing for us in that high, holy, glorious throne room of Almighty God

IV. The Superiority of Time: Once for All (vs. 25-26)

Hebrews 9:25-26 *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 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.*

A. Contrast: Christ did NOT Do What the Priests Did

1. High Priest enters the Most Holy Place “every year” and “year after year”
2. The endless repetition shows the ineffectiveness of these sacrifices (more in chapter 10)

B. If So, Christ Would Have Had to Suffer MANY TIMES

1. If Christ followed the same pattern, offering partially effective blood, He would have had to die in every generation for every generation's sin
2. This would be a great DISHONOR to Christ... like a poor surgeon who has to go back and reopen the patient to finish the surgery
3. Discussion with man in Nepal: “Okay, so Christ died for sins BACK THEN... but there have been MANY SINS since then! What about NOW? What about our sins in this generation?”

C. “Once for All” Shows Eternal Value of Christ's Blood

All human history covered:

1. From Creation to “Now” (vs. 26)
2. “Now” (vs. 26)
3. From “Now” until the End of Time (vs. 28)

D. Paul's Point in Romans 3: Christ's Death Paid for Old Testament Saints' Sins

Romans 3:25-26 *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

E. Author's Point Same Here... But Extended to the End of History

F. Analogy from Human Experience (vs. 27-28): SAME LESSON: “Once for all...”

***Hebrews 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,
²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people***

1. “Just as... so also”
2. Humans DIE ONCE...
3. Christ was SACRIFICED ONCE to take away sins
4. The value of His death extends to MANY PEOPLE

G. More on this Verse in a Moment!!

V. The Three Appearings of Christ

The word “appear” referring to Christ is used THREE TIMES in this passage:

Vs. 24, 26, 28

It implies in some way a dramatic presentation of Christ... like the cavalry suddenly appearing over the hill to save the battle, or the star witness dramatically appearing in court to testify for the defendant, or the star player who had been injured suddenly appearing from the locker room to win the game

The idea is of the dramatic UNFOLDING OF REDEMPTIVE HISTORY... Christ is a mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed to the human mind

Colossians 1:26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

Romans 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him-- ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

So also here Christ is presented in a powerful UNVEILING, as APPEARING... but especially as APPEARING **FOR US!!!**

Putting them in chronological order:

A. Incarnation Leading to Crucifixion (vs. 26)

Hebrews 9:26 But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

B. Ascension and Presentation to God in Heaven (vs. 24)

Hebrews 9:24 [Christ] entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

C. Second Coming Glory to Finish Our Salvation (vs. 28)

Hebrews 9:28 [Christ] will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

1.

VI. Looking Ahead: Waiting for Christ or Waiting for Judgment (vs. 27-28)

Hebrews 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once 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 waiting for him

A. Death and Judgment are Destined

1. The Greek word implies the set purpose and determination of Almighty God
2. God has put the entire human race under a death penalty
3. Physical death is absolutely certain and promised IF... we are not the final generation
 - a. Some biblical exceptions
 - b. Enoch and Elijah escaped the normal pattern of death and were taken directly out of this world
 - c. The people raised from the dead in the Bible DIED TWICE... like Lazarus
 - d. The final generation of people will not die but will be changed at the second coming of Christ
4. BUT apart from those exceptions, it is the absolute determination of Almighty God that every single human being on the face of the earth will die and after that face Judgment

B. Judgment Day Clearly Taught in the Bible

Revelation 20:12-13 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave

up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

THAT IS CERTAIN... the issue is, how shall we live in light of that approaching Day??

C. Looking Ahead with Joy: Eagerly Awaiting Christ's Appearing AND Our Perfection

and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him

1. Christ's second coming with COMPLETE OUR SALVATION
2. We will be delivered once and for all from sin, death, and judgment
3. We will receive our glorious resurrection bodies

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

D. Looking Ahead with Terror: Christ Coming to Bring Wrath and Judgment

Hebrews 10:27 a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

VII. Applications

A. Understand God's Decree in Verse 27: One Life to Live

1. Every day is sacred; every day is never to be repeated
2. Life moves inexorably in one direction... it is the decree of God; His set purpose for us all

3. The rhythm of the days should teach us this... sunrise... high noon... sunset
4. Scripture teaches it even more clearly

Hebrews 9:27 man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

B. Understand the Significance of Judgment Day

1. Scripture teaches us plainly what that day will entail

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

2. After death comes this day of accounting... there is no avoiding it, no escaping it
3. That judgment will be meticulous and careful

C. Understand the Superiority and Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice

1. Perfect sacrifice of Himself, of His own blood
2. The perfect place of offering: Heaven itself for us
3. The perfect time frame: Once for all

D. Be

E.