

The Better Blood

Hebrews 9:15-28

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 31, 2022

Well, good morning, everyone. I want to repeat what we heard earlier and that is happy Reformation Day to you. As it was just mentioned, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Church in Wittenberg, Germany and effectively ushered in the Protestant Reformation. Really changed the world as it was known for about 1000 years, took the people away from the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. And for those of you who are not familiar with that event, we actually did a sermon here at our church a couple of years ago called “Remembering the Reformation” and I walked us through five of the major reformers. We talked about Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox, and William Tyndale. And if you didn't get a chance to catch that, I would encourage you to go online and listen to it because the reason those men are so important is because that's our legacy as a church; that's where we come from. We are Protestant in that sense, those men took the people away from the traditions and superstitions and rituals of Catholicism and brought them back to the Bible. In fact, the reason you have an English Bible in your hands and not a Latin one, is because of the work of William Tyndale. They called him “God's outlaw” because the church chased him everywhere he went. A couple of times, he would translate a book like Matthew, and the authorities were coming after him, and he couldn't collect all his work and he would just leave and have to throw it away and do it again. But that was done so we could understand the Scriptures and we need to be grateful for that. So, please take a listen to that if you can.

And with that said, if you would open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews this morning, that's where we're going in the Scriptures today. We are going to the book of Hebrews, which tells us something no other book does and that is it explains the Old Testament in light of Christ. That's the theme of the book of Hebrews and shows us how we are to look at all the customs and ceremonies and rituals of the Jews in light of what Jesus did for us at the cross. To be clear, there are other books of the Bible that do that, and you can find information about that in other parts of God's word. But none of them do it the way Hebrews does it. It is very thorough in this. And you can see this in our passage for this morning, if you would look in Hebrews nine and starting in verse 11; we're going to start reading in Hebrews 9:11, says this, it says,

But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the Holy Place once for all having obtained eternal redemption. For at the blood of goats and bulls in the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. For this

reason, He is the mediator of a New Covenant, so that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never enforced, while the one who made it lives. Therefore, even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, He took the blood of the calves and the goats with water, and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people saying "this is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." And in the same way, He sprinkled both the tabernacle in the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood and without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of things in heaven to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these, for Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor was it that he would offer Himself often as the high priests enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not His own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world. But now once at the consummation of the ages, He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And then as much as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. So, Christ also having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation with reference to sin to those who eagerly await Him.

And we'll stop the reading there. If you noticed, as I just mentioned, there's a lot of Old Testament references in this text. It talks about several things in here that the people of Israel were familiar with, like the covenant and the law and the commandments. You see that mentioned in here. It talks about the sacrifices and offerings and how Moses sprinkled blood on the book, and the tabernacle and the vessels that were in there, which was an unusual thing to do, I would have personally found that to be interesting to watch. It talks about the priests, it talks about the holy place, it talks about cleansing and mentions defilement and blemishes, and dead works and judgment. Why? Because if you look in verse 11, it starts off by saying "when Christ appeared," He changed all that for us, that is how the passage comes together. The reason it talks about all that is because when Jesus showed up, He came to do away with the need for those things once and for all. And the Jews used to worship the Lord in the tabernacle, not anymore; they used to worship the Lord, or the people of God, we could say, used to worship the Lord by the sacrifices, but not anymore; they used to worship Him by means of priests and Levites, and offerings and blood, but now all that's ended, because of Christ. He is the one who turned it all around for them. Because verse 15, says He is the mediator of a new covenant. That means He's the mediator of a new relationship with God, that's better than anything that people had ever experienced before. And we don't often think about this as Gentiles or non-Jews, but there's a reason we don't kill animals anymore as a church. And there's a reason we don't worship to the smell of incense. You come in here, this building smells like everything else. There's a reason we don't do it in light of a lamp stand up here on

the stage. There's a reason we don't do it within the sight of shewbread. There's a reason we don't do it next to an altar, there's a reason we don't do it next to a temple or in a temple. And that's because Jesus provided something greater, Amen. I mean, you hear that in the 21st century, it doesn't mean that much to you. But it would have meant the world to these people, which is why the author mentions it here. It would have given them so much hope. Because from what we could tell, life was very hard on the Jews living at this point in the first century. And we haven't said a lot about this before, so I want to say a few words about it here.

We've talked about Israel's history as it relates to the temple and the tabernacle in the Old Testament. And if you've missed any of those sermons, you can go back and listen. But we haven't said much about the intertestamental years, or the time between the Old and New Testament. So, I want to do that for a second because there was an event that occurred right as the Old Testament was coming to a close, that had a major impact on these people and their way of life. It was known as the diaspora, or the "dispersion" in Greek. There was a time when the Babylonians came into Jerusalem in 586 BC, and captured the capital, took the people away, and dispersed them to the four winds of the earth. They scattered them everywhere. To be more specific to the point that we don't really know where the book of Hebrews was written to, but it probably wasn't written to the Jews in Jerusalem, because they were everywhere at this time. To be more specific, the Assyrians came in and did that with the 10 northern tribes in 721 BC and the Babylonians came in afterwards, about a century and a half later and scattered the rest, which totally ruined their way of life. I mean for one thing, the Babylonians tore the temple down, and they removed all the objects of worship, they took away the altar and labor and lampstand, they removed the table of shewbread and the incense and the ark, and they never brought it back. From that point forward, the Jews would never see the Ark of the Covenant again. That was where God met with them. He spoke to them on the mercy seat on top of the ark, and now it was gone forever. When they would come back and rebuild the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, there would be no ark with them, which made their worship a hollow shell of what it used to be. If that weren't enough, at the same time, they did that, the Babylonians also started intermarrying the Jews, with people from other races. This is one of their policies at the time when they would conquer a nation. Babylon and Assyria would force the inhabitants to leave their family and have children with captives from other nations in order to wipe out their bloodline. They did it to exterminate the original race, so they would no longer be able to unite and rebel against the new masters; isn't that a cruel thing to do. Which created a big problem for the Jews because now for the first time in history, they had to wrestle with the question, which one of us is Jewish and which one's not? Who comes from the line of Abraham and who doesn't, and they really couldn't tell anymore. Well, they could, but it was a wrestling match. Even today, if you go to Israel, you're going see dark skinned Jews and light skinned Jews there. You will see black haired Jews and blond-haired Jews and red-haired Jews. There will be blue eyed Jews. In brown eyed Jews and Jews with every color eyed under the sun, and this is why, it all went back to this event.

And worst of all those years ushered in a time of complete silence from Yahweh. It brought about a period of 400 years when there was no prophecy, no preachers, no word from God, from the time of Malachi all the way to the time of John the Baptist. In fact, one of the last things that Jews heard from the book of Malachi at this time was when the Lord told them that “oh, that there were one of you who would shut the gates that you would not uselessly kindle fires on my altars. I'm not pleased with you, nor will I accept an offering from you.” That's how the Old Testament comes to a close. Which eventually cause things to become so bad in Israel, that it led to violence.

If you've ever studied this period of history before the intertestamental years, you'll know that all that chaos and conflict led to one of the greatest battles that Israel's ever fought known as the “Maccabean Wars.” Because after Babylon left the city of Jerusalem and the area was taken over by someone else named Alexander the Great, who you've heard of, I'm sure who treated them well. By all accounts, Alexander got on along fabulously with the Jews. But someone else came in later who didn't his name was Antiochus Epiphanies. In 168 BC, he took the throne, and he hated Israel or hated their culture, and so he did his best to exterminate their way of life. He created a series of policies with things like he would he would make it illegal to practice circumcision in the Sabbath. He made it against the law to pray to Yahweh and read the Torah. He went so far as to tell them they had to sacrifice pig inside the temple and set up a statue of Zeus there, and as a result, the Jews got fed up and revolted. One day an elderly priest named Mattathias was ordered to sacrifice a pig to Zeus; he refused to do it, and another priests offered to do it for him, and Mattathias killed him. So, he turned on his fellow Levite, cut him down in the temple, and then turn to the soldier that ordered it and killed him too. At which point he ran past the statue of Zeus, he said, “let everyone who was zealous for the law come out with me” and they did that a group of Jews known as the Hasidim or Hasidic Jews, ran away with Mattathias to the mountains and waged a guerrilla war against Antiochus, which was so successful that they kept at it for the next 20 years, and eventually ran the foreigners out of Israel. When they did so, they recaptured Jerusalem, purified the Temple of all the pig carcasses and today, that event is known in a holiday called Hanukkah, with the Festival of Lights. That is when they re-lit the lights in the sanctuary, after Antiochus snuff them out. It was a great day for Israel. It is one of the greatest highlights of their history. But unfortunately, it didn't last because eventually Mattathias' family would take over and install one of his sons named Jonathan into the role of high priest, which was a wicked thing to do, because he was not a son of heir and he was not qualified for the role and that just made things continued to be chaotic. That would eventually lead to more violence, more bloodshed, more fighting behind the scenes, with Jew upon Jew turning against each other.

In fact, Jesus, if you remember, He had a disciple named Simon, the what? Simon the Zealot, remember that guy, you know what you could call him, you could call him “Simon the terrorist.” That is what the zealots were in Israel. They were a group of people who made it their sole aim in life to terrorize people like Jonathan and the Maccabees. They would kidnap them, torture them and murder them anytime they got a chance. And the reason I bring all that up is to show you that was the atmosphere these people were living in at this point in history. That was the spiritual climate the book of Hebrews was written to,

it was just a mess. The people were a complete disaster, spiritually speaking and in order to address that the author says this to them. At the end of Hebrews nine, if you look in verse 28 with all that background, it might help to put this in context, because he says this.

So Christ also having been offered wants to bear the sins of many will appear a second time for salvation to those who eagerly await Him.

And what does that mean? Why is he saying that to these people, he's saying that to point out the fact that Jesus is coming back again in order to save the Jews. He is returning to help these people out and deliver them from all that chaos. The verse says when He died, He came wants to bear the sins of many that means many Jews, or many Gentiles, whoever would believe in Him. And it says that he will show up again for those who eagerly await Him, which describes these people too, because if anyone was looking for a Savior back then it was Israel. And if anybody wanted someone to come back and deliver them from their enemies, it would be the people of Israel.

The point is that in the midst of all this pandemonium I just described, listen, friends, the author gives these people one thing, and one thing only to encourage them and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen. He points them to the Messiah. He doesn't tell them to go back to the law, you would think that if you're writing to people like this, he would tell the Jews, if you want to be saved from your troubles, you need to go back to the commandments again, you broke them. He doesn't do that. You would think he might tell them that well, if you want to avoid the Maccabees and all the terrible things they're doing, you need to go back to the sacrifices, that would work. He doesn't say that. He doesn't tell them to go back to the priesthood, he didn't tell them to go back to the Levites. He doesn't tell them to go back to the tabernacle. He points them to Christ, because He is sufficient. And I tell you that because He's the same way today, Jesus hasn't changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. And that's what we're going to look at this morning. I know it's a very simple way to introduce this passage. But the reason I wanted to do that is because we don't have a simple passage before us. It is actually a pretty difficult one to work through. But the message is very clear at the beginning, it's all about the Savior.

And so, if you're taking notes this morning, this is what we're going to talk about, with five reasons why Jesus had to die for us in this passage. So that's our outline for today. And Hebrews nine starting in verse 15 and following, we're going to look at five reasons why Jesus had to die for us. And the reason the authors spends so much time talking about this as Tyler mentioned earlier, blood is a major theme in here, you're going to see the word blood mentioned nine times in the section. But the reason he talks about this is because the Jews would have wondered if Jesus is the Messiah, why did He have to die like this? And they would have been questioning if He was going to come back and rule, then why did He have to go to the cross and so in order to address that the author spends a lot of work here, explaining why His death was so important. And the first reason is this, because it validated the covenant. The first reason why Jesus had to die like this was in order to validate the new covenant, which means He died in order to fulfill the promise God made to us in the Gospel. And as you come to this first verse in verse

15, it might be a little confusing if you read it all the way through. So, what we're going to do is take it bit by bit and walk through it, because it begins this way, verse 15, says, "for this reason, Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant." Now, what's the significance of that? Well, the author says that because he's comparing two things here: the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, the promise God made with Israel with the promise of God made with the church, in order to say that the one you have is better, because it has a better definite. The old covenant had definite, New Covenant has definite they had sacrifices in blood, you have sacrifices in blood, but the one you have is greater, which is talked about in the rest of this verse when it says,

For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant, so that since a death has taken place, for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

And that's a rather long way of saying, since Jesus died in order to take care of the sins of Israel, like we just talked about, you can know for certain He will take care of your sins too. And since He redeemed all their transgressions, you know, He will redeem your transgressions, because the cross was sufficient. His one death was enough to take care of the sins of all those who would believe, for all time in human history, whether they be in the days of Israel or the days of the church. Some theologians have called this retroactive salvation. That means that the cross, it took care of the sins that were committed beforehand for those who would believe and those who would be committed afterwards. After saying that, verse 16, says this,

For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never enforced, while the one who made it lives.

Now, that may seem to come out of nowhere in the in the passage here, but it doesn't, because the author is explaining how covenants worked in the first century. In order for them to go into effect, the person who made it has to die. In fact, the word covenant here is the Greek word *diatheke*, which refers to a covenant or vow or promise, but it can also refer to a will or bequest. If you have an English Standard Version of the Bible, it reads like this "for where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established," otherwise, it's useless that death has to take place or else the will is good for nothing.

I looked it up this week and found that last year, Canadian parents willed their children a billion dollars, which is very generous isn't it. But the fact is the kids don't get the money until the parents deceased and pass away. It is the same way with your eternal inheritance and Salvation in Christ. Jesus has to die first in order to make it happen. In fact, when you do a survey in the Bible, you find this is the way things worked in Israel. Under the Old Covenant, just about anytime something big happened, something died along with it. It happened over and over again in their history. For example, when God

gave them a law, He told them to kill something. Then when He gave them the priesthood, He told them to kill something. And when He gave them the tabernacle, He told them to kill something. When He gave them the temple, He told them to kill something first because it was God's way of ratifying that part of the covenant and putting His seal of approval on it saying that it's active now and ready to go. In fact, if you look in verse 18, to give you an example of this from the Old Covenant, it says,

therefore, even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, He took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." And in the same way He sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.

Now, that's just an illustration of what he's been saying here, it's a reference to Exodus 24, which occurred right at the time when the Old Covenant was given to show you this is how the Old Covenant began. It began with blood. You could even say it began with blood upon blood upon blood. And it started with death upon death upon death because Moses just sprinkled death on everything here. He spread it on the law, he spread it on the people, he spread on the tabernacle. There were one to 2 million Jews at the time, by the way, so when it says he sprinkled the people, some of the commentators say he didn't sprinkle it like this, he more or less kind of flung it, like a whip.

That is not even all. When you read other parts of the Bible, you'll find Leviticus 8:10, says he sprinkled blood on the garments of Aaron and his sons when they became priests in Israel. He put it on their clothes to demonstrate they could not come into God's presence as they were, there had to be sacrifice first. Then Leviticus 8:24, says he put blood on the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe, to show that everything about them had to be treated that way too. The blood couldn't just go on their clothes, it had to go on their bodies. Leviticus 16:14 says, the high priests had to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 17:6 says he had to sprinkle blood on the altar when the people sinned. Leviticus 4:18 said he had to put blood on the horns of the altar, specifically. But you get the idea here, there is just blood everywhere. There is one word in Leviticus that's repeated 40 times, is the word "holiness." And there's a connection between holiness and blood in that book. You are not holy, you've sinned against God, so, in order to pay for that, there's got to be a sacrifice. But the reason the Lord wanted them to do all of that was to show them he was wholeheartedly committed to them. He was serious about the covenant that he made with them. God loves animals, He enjoys the creatures that he made, so, when He saw the priests putting a knife across their throat, it was precious to Him. And when He saw them, taking the life at the altar of the creatures and sprinkling the blood, it moved Him, so that what He did in response is to place their sins on the animal and forgive them. Repeatedly, over and over again. And this passage brings us up here to say that if the Lord did all that for Israel, through the death of an animal, how much more will He do for you through the death of Christ? His blood is more precious than an animal's blood. His death is more valuable in the sight of God than a bull or a

lamb and you need to remember this, God did not give anyone's life in order to save you. He gave the life of the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity, which means if you're ever tempted to wonder if God loves you, you shouldn't do that anymore. And if you're ever tempted to ask the question, does He care about me? If you're a believer, that's not necessary. God doesn't just say He care, He proves it and shows that with Christ's blood, not anyone's blood, but Christ's blood, not anybody's death, but the death of Messiah. I mentioned that because I hear people say today that they don't think God loves me anymore. They don't believe He cares. But when you read a passage like this, how could you say that? How could you ever get the impression God doesn't care about you as a Christian, it's just the opposite.

And it brings it to another reason why Jesus had to die, and that is in order to forgive us. So, the first reason why Christ has to die in this passage, is to validate the covenant. He stepped into the place of those animals, He stepped into the place of their death, provided His death instead. But the second one is in order to forgive us. And this one will sound a little similar to the first, but I wanted to cover it in its own section, because it's such a rich verse, you can't pass over it quickly. But if you look in verse 22, the author tells us this, it says,

And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Now, when he says here that according to the Law, all things could be cleansed with blood; the author is summarizing everything he said before about Moses sprinkling the book of the law and, and the blood and the people and the tabernacle and all those vessels in it in order to say this is why he did that. And that is because according to the law, all things should be cleansed with blood. You shouldn't pour it out on a few things you should point out and everything. You shouldn't sprinkle a few objects in the tabernacle or temple, you should sprinkle it on every object, theoretically, because everything is covered in sin. The reason you have to do that is because everything you have is impacted with the effects of your depravity because you're breaking God's law at every point in your life, so, every point has to be purified with a sacrifice. In fact, when verse 22 says, all things are cleansed with blood, that's an unusual thing to say isn't it. Because we don't often think of blood as a cleansing agent, we typically see it as a dirty thing. I dare say none of you showered in blood this morning before coming to church, that's gross. And none of you wash your food in blood before you a breakfast, I mean, we wouldn't even do that. But this passage says you have to do that with sin, because blood is the only thing that can cleanse it. Water can't do that, soap can't do that, shampoo can't do that. It takes blood. In fact, I can just stop here and ask the question to you: is this how you see your sin today? Do you believe your life is so bad that it would take blood to cleanse it? Do you believe your behavior is so wicked and depraved and ugly in the sight of God, that in order to forgive you, something would have to die? Not just in some things, but in all things? Your behavior is not just wrong in some areas, but in every area? I ask you that because if you don't see it that way, let me tell you something, you don't see your sin the way God does.

God hates your sin. It is repulsive in His eyes. I mean, how many lies have you told? More than you can remember right? How many times have you been angry with someone? You don't even know it's been happening since you were a child. I've asked children that question. Do you remember the first time you lied? They don't remember. How many times have you cursed? How many times have you blasphemed? How many times have you slandered or gossip or torn someone down or covet something? We do it over and over again. It's a perpetual habit of the human nature and that's why you need blood to cover you in every part.

Some of you have heard of the term total depravity that's where this term comes from. It means our depravity or our sin nature is total. Not because we're as sinful as we could be, most of us are not as bad probably as we could be. But because our sin nature impacts every part of us. It reaches down to the depths of our soul, which is why forgiveness has to come that way. It has to come from an outside sacrifice. It says here in verse 22 "without shedding a blood, there is no forgiveness." And that means you don't get forgiveness by earning it. You don't get forgiveness by working for it. You don't get forgiveness by trying harder or doing more are striving, like people did under the Old Covenant, some of them did. You do it by blood. You only get it when someone dies. In the Old Testament it was an animal, in the New Testament it's Christ. And this tells you this, that no one is forgiven apart from this, and I mean, no one. That's what it says: verse 22 says, "without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." It doesn't say without shedding of blood, there is some forgiveness. It doesn't say without shedding of blood, there's a little forgiveness. It doesn't say without the shedding of blood, there's occasional forgiveness. None. Zero, zilch, nada, not even a drop. That's for good people and bad people. That's for religious people and irreligious people. Which means if you've come to church today without Christ, you're in trouble because there's no forgiveness for you. Well, there's forgiveness that's offered for you, but you don't have it on you right now. And if you leave this place, without Christ, you're in trouble there too, because your sins are not cleansed. You need to take this seriously and run to Him.

John Wesley tells a story at the time, an old thief came to him and John Wesley told him that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you from your sins. And the man said, "every one of them?" John Wesley said, "yeah, everyone." The guy kind of thought about it a minute, he said, "even the sins of a thief?" He said, "yeah, the sins of a thief." He said, "even the sins of a murderer?" John Wesley said, "yeah" he said, "even the sins of a drunk?" He said, "yeah, the sins of a drunk, he can cleanse those too." And the man said, "I guess He really can save a sinner like me." It's true. Jesus can save anybody today. But the fact is, you have to come to Him for Salvation.

And it brings us to another reason why the Lord had to die. And that is to appear in the presence of God for us. A third reason why the Messiah had to die in this chapter, is to appear in the presence of God for us, which means He did that, so, He could go to the Father as our substitute, and stand in our place. And as the passage moves on here to the next paragraph, you can see that the author is going to continue this discussion of death and blood and the cleansing power of it. Because all throughout this portion of the

letter, he's reminding you that the blood of Jesus Christ can save you in the way that we've been talking about. And in verse 23, he says this, it says, "Therefore, it's necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens, to be cleansed with these." And that phrase, the copies of the things in heaven, it's a reference to the objects in the tabernacle that Moses, sprinkled with blood way back above this in verse 21. They're actually spelled out for you by name even further up in the passage in verses two through five, if you want to look back up there, because it mentions there, the lampstand, and the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense because those are not the actual objects in heaven, but they're copies of them. They were put there in the tabernacle to remind Israel of what heaven is like, which is why Moses sprinkled them with blood. And here, it says, in a similar manner, that "it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices." And to be honest, this is one of the hardest passages to work through in the book of Hebrews because this verse can be explained multiple ways, and none of them are without their share of difficulties. I mean, no matter how you look at this particular verse, there's no explanation that fully answers all the questions that you would have when you study it. But when you dive into it, you find it can be interpreted several different ways: For example, verse 23, can be taken to mean that there are literal things in heaven that Jesus cleanse with his blood. And there's physical objects up there like an altar and laver and lampstand, that He sprinkled with it once He ascended to the Father. But the problem with that view, is that the Bible never mentions anything like that. It never tells us that Jesus sprinkled his blood on a physical object in heaven, because He didn't need to, everything in heaven is sinless, so, we can toss that view out. Others have interpreted this to mean that there are spiritual things in heaven that He did that to instead, like the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms as Ephesians six verse 12, talks about. It could be a reference to a time when Jesus went to heaven and touched the demons and fallen angels with His sacrifice, but just by explaining that you can tell that view is wrong, throw that out. So, others have interpreted to me that this is a reference to us and that's probably the view I would hold to. Because the idea is that there are human things in heaven that Jesus sprinkled with His blood in order to forgive them and give them entrance into heaven. And one reason I would see it this way, it's because if you Look in verse 24 it says,

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us

And a key phrase in that verse is the phrase "for us", you might want to, if you have a pen, underlined in your Bibles, or put a star beside it, because it means that Jesus did not merely enter into heaven and cleanse the things in there, but He did it for us. He did it for ordinary, sinful people like you and me. Which should blow your mind, this is amazing. As one pastor said, it is not hard to believe Jesus appears in heaven, that's easy, He's done that for all eternity. The shocking thing about the passage is that He appears in heaven for us, Amen. He went up there after He died to represent the likes of you and me and intercede for us there. If that doesn't humble you, I don't know what will. Because this shows you that from the moment you trust in Christ, until the day you die, there will never be a second or minute or hour when Jesus will not appear in the presence of God for you. And it reminds you that from

the time you believe in Him until the time your soul leaves this world, there will not be a day or week or month, when He will not fail to be there at the Father's side, looking out for you to make sure you're okay. When you struggle with things today, He is there for you. When you struggle with things tomorrow, He is there for you, when you struggle with things the day after that He is at the father's side, for you.

Friends, let me tell you, this is something that separates Christianity from every other religion in the world. The Muslims say Muhammad is in heaven, but they don't say Muhammad is in heaven for them. They don't say he's doing it on their behalf. He's doing it on his own behalf. The Buddhists say Buddha's in heaven or in Nirvana, but they don't say he's up there to save them. As far as they're concerned, it's every man for himself. You want to get to heaven, you do the work. It's not that way with you because of Christ. In fact, verse 25, goes on to add to this, when it talks about the time when the high priest entered the holy place on the Day of Atonement, in order to make a contrast between what he did and what Christ does, because whereas Israel's High Priests entered the holy place in the temple for them, Jesus did more than that, because He entered heaven itself. And whereas the high priests entered it year by year, Christ, and more than that, too, because he only had to do it once, one time, one entrance, and that was it. Whereas their high priests enter through blood that was not his own. Jesus went one step further, because He did it through his own blood, in order to demonstrate that his death was completely unique. He gave us something that was far greater than anything Israel ever experienced under the Old Covenant.

Which brings us to another reason why Jesus had to die for us and that is to put away sin. If you're reading through this passage, you might be thinking that at this point, the author should stop there because he's out of material. After all, he said, so far, you would think he would come to the end of verse 25 and wrap it up, because he said so much already. But he's not done yet, because he gives you a fourth reason why Christ had to die and that is to put away sin. Verse 26, says this

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself

And a term in verse 26, that should really stand out to you and catch your attention is the word "once." Because the idea is that unlike the work of the high priest that had to be repeated, year after year, on the Day of Atonement, Jesus only had to die once and that was enough to put away your sin for good. Next week, we're going to come to chapter 10 and you're going to see that one of the greatest weaknesses under the Old Covenant system is that, under the former way of doing things, that Jews had to keep making sacrifices, because he could never put away sin completely. It always left him lingering. It could provide a temporary forgiveness for it. But that was all because every time the Jews made a sacrifice, inevitably they would sin again and have to do it again, and then they would sin again and have to do it again, and then they would sin again and have to do it again, and when they did, they would have to go

back to the temple, back to the priests, back to the altar, hand an animal over to him. But this passage says with Christ, it's different because now, "once at the consummation of the ages, He has been manifested to put away sin." And the phrase "put away" it's one word in Greek, which is the word *athetetis*. It refers to something that renders an object null and void because it annihilates its power, it removes all the strength away from it. That's what Christ has done with sin, He's removed the power of it once and for all. Which is why the beginning of this verse says that Jesus doesn't have to suffer often, since the foundation of the world. The reason that says it is because when you annihilate something, you don't have to do that. And when you remove its power, you don't have to keep being sacrificed for it, there's no reason. And in fact, I want to say some more words about this term because when you study the literature this time, you find that the word of *athetetis* was used for several things. One of them was for the act of getting a divorce in the first century. Because when you divorce someone, this is what you do. You break the former relationship you had with them, you render it null and void because before you used to live with them, now you don't, before you used to speak with them, now you don't, before you used to eat with them, and be on good terms with them and be friendly; but something came between the two of you and changed all that. This verse says this is what Christ did with sin, He came between the two of you and changed everything about your former relationship. So, the now you shouldn't live with sin, speak with sin, eat with sin, be on friendly terms with it, because all that's over now. I like what one commentator had to say about this was because he said when you consider the word *athetetis*, you find there's numerous ways to express this word. You can use it to say that Jesus shattered sin, destroyed sin and obliterated it. You can use it to say that he eliminated it, stomped on it and turned on it and treated it like an enemy. He slayed it, slaughtered it butchered it, He tossed it aside, threw it out, cast it from His presence, never to be seen again. Not for a few sins, but every sin. Because the word sin, if you look in the verse is in singular here, which implies that He didn't do it for one evil deed that we've done, but every one of them. He put them all in a bundle and died for them at once, so, you can live like it now.

The reason He did that was so you could enjoy His victory and put your sins away too. That's what Christ wants you to do now that He's died. He wants you to shatter your sin because He shattered your sin. He wants you to live like it's been destroyed because He destroyed it. He wants you to stomp on it because He stomped on it at the cross. But whatever you do, He doesn't want you to go on living like everything is the same. He doesn't want you to behave as if nothing happened in the relationship with sin because something has happened - Jesus put it away. Verse 26 also says this happened at the consummation of the ages, and that refers to the consummation of the former ages, or the time of the Old Covenant, because that's where we're living today. We're living in a time when Jesus has given us all of this after He consummated the Old Covenant. This means Jesus hasn't just injured our sin, He's slain it. At this time, He hasn't just hurt it a little bit, He slaughtered it. He hasn't just wounded it some, like they did with the sacrifices, He's butchered it completely. And that should make us live a different life.

I'll never forget the time I met a man in Los Angeles who told me that he'd gotten saved after robbing a bank. Because when he did, the police threw him in jail, and someone shared the Gospel with him, and he believed. Nicest guy in the world, by the way, I never would have thought he would have robbed the bank. And shortly afterwards, a friend of his came to visit him in prison. And he was shocked because he was so happy, so, he asked him why. And the man said, "because I'm saved. I'm happy because Jesus has forgiven all my sins at the cross. And now I want to live like it." We all need to say the same thing after setting a passage like this one. This word should change our lives.

Which brings us to a final reason why Jesus had to die. Just to review these other ones, and the first one is He had to die to validate the covenant. Secondly, He had to do it in order to forgive us. Thirdly, He died in order to enter heaven for us, or appear in heaven for us. Fourthly, He did it to put away sin. And this is an incredible thing, because for years, the Jews were longing for this. And for centuries, they were calling out for a Savior who would come and put away sin and take away their enemies, and you get to experience it now. You get to be a part of the redemption they waited for, for all these years. We said had this before in the book of Hebrews, but it's a good thing to live on this side of the cross, Amen. And it's a blessing to be around at the consummation of the ages. The Lord is allowing you to witness something people have only dreamed of and it's a tremendous privilege. Which brings us to one more reason why our Lord had to die and that was so He could appear a second time for those who eagerly wait for Him. We are just following along the passage here because the fifth reason why Jesus had to die in here was so that He could appear a second time for those who eagerly wait for Him. Which is something we alluded to before, but we want to say more about this. Because the blessings of Christ's sacrifice don't stop in verse 26, they go on when it says this in verse 27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many

And I just want to stop there and point out to you that verse 27, is possibly one of the most famous verses in the book of Hebrews. Many of you have had to memorize it in your evangelism training. Because the idea here is that just as we die once, so also Christ died once. And just as we pass away and go to face judgment afterwards, Jesus dies and experiences something else, which I'll talk about here in a second. Now, before I do, I just want to point out that this is a verse you could draw several applications from right here, you don't even have to go further. For one thing, verse 27, shows you that reincarnation is a lie. And that means that you don't get to come back as something else after you die. And when you pass away, you don't get to return and do it all over again, like as a cow or a dog or something like that, you die once and then you're judged. You live once and then you face God immediately afterwards. And this also means that post-mortem salvation is a lie too or the idea that you die and get a second chance to be saved. You pass away and you get to stand before the Lord and hear the Gospel again, and potentially believe, you don't, you get one chance, one shot, one opportunity to be saved right now in this life and that's it. There is no opportunity afterwards. And this also means soul sleep is a lie, or the idea that you become unconscious when you die, that doesn't happen either. This passage is pretty clear

about that. You are awake to experience everything and we could go on to talk more about this. But the reason I don't want to do that is because I want you to see how this connects with the rest of the passage, because the author uses this statement to apply it to Christ and talk about His Second Coming. Because this is how Jesus' death is different from the death of a normal man. And that is because when normal people die, they're judged afterwards are their scrutinize, believers are scrutinized, and they go to heaven because they're forgiven and the blood of Christ covers them. Unbelievers go through that, and they go to hell because they're not. But when Jesus dies, it's a different process. Because He goes up to heaven to await the time when He will return. In fact, this is another passage we could draw a lot from, because verse 28, says,

so Christ also having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time for salvation, without reference to sin, to those who eagerly wait for Him.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I first read this, I was interested in the fact that this is how the chapter ends; because after talking about the death of Christ for 27 verses, he ties it off this way by reminding us that as powerful as Christ's death was, it would not be the end of Him, because one day soon, He's coming back. Verse 28 says He will do it without reference to sin. That means, He will return without reference to paying for sin because He's already done that at one time at the cross, so that when He returns, it will be to rule and reign. And it says that He will do it for Salvation and that means our final Salvation or the final stages of it. Because Jesus has saved us once already at the cross, but He hasn't glorified us yet. He hasn't given us our resurrected bodies and created a new heavens and new earth for us to live in for all eternity; so, that's what this is talking about here. This is a reference to the time when He will come back to do all of that.

And to be honest, this passage doesn't give us a lot of details as to what that looks like. He just mentions it in passing and goes on to talk about something else. But there's other passages in the Bible that tell us that in order to start this process, Jesus will rapture His church and take it out of the world. First Thessalonians four says the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first and meet the Lord in the air. Then there will be a great tribulation such as the world has never seen before when He will judge it, and punish it and rebuke it for its sin, by turning the sun into darkness and the moon into the color of blood. He will make the waters of the earth bitter and hail fall from the sky. He will create an earthquake that will kill millions and a plague in a drought that will do the same and then Christ will return. Because at that time, heaven will be opened, and He will descend on a white horse to judge and wage war against His enemies. And His eyes will be a flame of fire, and on His head will be many crowns, and from His mouth will come a sharp sword. His robe will be dipped in blood, His name will be the Word of God, and He will tread the wine press of the fierce wrath of God Almighty.

At that point, He will set up the Millennial Kingdom, He will rule the earth for 1000 years, then He will create a new Heavens and New Earth where there will be no more mourning or crying or pain, because

He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. And we could go on and on about this as well, but all this is being implied in this one little statement in verse 28, that He will appear a second time.

In fact, several years ago, John MacArthur read a statement at the together for the gospel conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and I can't do any better than just to repeat his words to you on this. I've read this document to you before but it's so good, it's worth mentioning again, you can find it online. But he said this:

- We preach Christ, who is the eternal Son, one in nature with the Father and the eternal spirit, the Triune God.
- We preach Christ who is a creator, life giver, as well as the sustainer of the universe, and all who live in it, who is the Virgin born Son of God and Son of man, fully divine and fully human.
- We preach Christ who is the One whose life on Earth perfectly please God, and His righteousness is given to all who by grace through faith become one with Him.
- We preach Christ who is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin that pleases God, and His death under divine judgment, paid in full the penalty for the sins of His people, providing for them forgiveness and eternal life.
- We preach Christ who is alive having been raised from the dead by the father, validating His work of atonement, and providing resurrection for the sanctification and glorification of the elect, to bring them safely into His heavenly presence.
- We preach Christ who is at the Father's throne, interceding for all believers, who is God's chosen Prophet, Priest, and King, proclaiming truth mediating for His church and reigning over His kingdom forevermore.
- We preach Christ who will return suddenly from heaven to rapture, His church, unleashed judgment on the wicked, bring promised salvation to the Jews, and the nations and establish His millennial reign on the earth.
- We preach Christ who will after that earthly reign, destroy the universe, finally judge all sinners, and send them to hell, then create the new heavens and new earth, where He will dwell forever with the saints and glory.
- We preach Christ, who is the hope for centers light of the world, Bread of Life, and Shepherd of law souls.
- We preach Christ who is the only sure way to go to heaven.

Friends, can we all say amen to that? That's what we do as a church. That's what you do as Christians, we preach Christ, because He's coming again. If you're battling with sin today, don't worry, He's coming again and a day will come and He'll put a stop to all your sin.

And if you're wrestling with fear and anxiety over the problems in this world, like Israel did, because it's such a mess, and it's so awful, and it's so wicked, you don't have to do that either, because He's coming for that too. Our hope is fully rested in Him.

Next week, we're going to cover chapter 10, and the beginning of it, and talk about Christ some more. But for now, let's close in a word of prayer and thank our Lord for all He's done and all He's coming back to do.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for Christ. For this gift of gift, this Lord of lords, this Prince of peace and this sacrifice, above all sacrifices. None of us can go to heaven on our own Lord, we've just established that our sins go farther than we can even imagine. And you and your grace and mercy have given us Jesus. Lord, we rejoice in that we've only even scratched the surface of what He'd done in a passage like this one, but we are so grateful, Lord. Thank You, Father, that you've allowed us to live in this day and age when He has come on the cross and died for our sins. Lord, may we go out and live different lives as a result of it. These things are not taught just doctrinally and theoretically, they are taught to change your life. And Lord we want to approach it that way this morning as well. And Father, as we often do, I pray for those who are sitting among us who may be lost this morning, who don't know Christ. Father, I pray for them. Because as this passage says very clearly right here, it's appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment and that applies to lost people as well. Lord, we don't want any here to face judgment, without Christ. So, I pray for them that they would repent and be saved. They would trust in Jesus for His mercy and know that the blood of Christ can cleanse them completely from sin. For all of us who have experienced the cleansing, we rejoice, Lord, and all we can say is Alleluia and thank you for such a savior. We pray this all in Jesus' name, Amen.