

**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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<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 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.** (NIV 84)

For the most part, you know what to expect when you enter into a church for worship. You anticipate singing, and praying. You will listen to Scripture lessons and a sermon. You might expect to see the children sing or hear other children cry. Today you may be able to smell all the greater and wonderful food downstairs for our Harvest Dinner after the service. Perhaps you can smell someone's cologne or perfume or the wine when you go up for Communion. There are many sights, sounds, smells, and so on that you anticipate as you walking into a church for worship—all of that and more plays into your whole experience.

But it was a completely different experience for the Jews of Jerusalem as they entered in the temple. To us, the temple would have seen more like a barn or a slaughterhouse. Countless bulls, goats, lambs, birds, and so on were brought to the temple every day—for one specific purpose—to offer them to the Lord as a sacrifice. At the temple you would have heard the bleating of sheep, and cry of the animals as they were slaughtered. The smell of the animals would have filled your nostrils, along with their flesh being burned on the altar—you might have caught a whiff or two of the incense from the altar of incense. All this you would have seen. It was a bloody ordeal to say the least—it was spilled, and poured, and sprinkled.

That is the Lord established it when he set up an elaborate system of sacrifices for the people to follow. In first seven chapters of Leviticus the Lord establishes four different types of bloody sacrifices. To begin

each morning and to end each evening the priests offered up the whole burnt offering—where they took a bull and placed it on the altar and burned it all up—it signified their relationship with the Lord and their complete dedication to him with all their lives. Next up was the fellowship offering. A family or an individual could offer up a fellowship offering to the Lord to express their love for the Lord in their relationship to him. The best parts—or the fat portions of this sacrifice was given to the Lord on the altar while the rest of the meat was shared with the priests and those who brought it—God would share the gift given to him with those who brought it! Then there was the guilt offering. If you had sinned against someone and thus were in debt to him, you could offer up a guilt offering to make restitution for your sin before God and the one your wronged. Finally we get to the sin offering, which was for the entire community, a priest, a leader, or anyone. The purpose of the sin offering was to offer a chance to confess their sin and to be assured of God's free forgiveness. A key feature of the sin offering was the pouring out of blood. After the priest killed the animal it would pour some of its blood on the altar and at the base of the altar. All of these sacrifices took place day after day, again and again animals were slaughtered in sacrifice to the Lord. Those who offered such sacrifices would have their sins forgiven until the next time a sin was committed and you brought in another sacrifice.

The most well-known sin offering was given on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. On that day the high priest offered up a sin offering for all the people, but first had to consecrate, or make holy by offering a sin offering for himself. So he took a bull, killed it, and took its blood into the Most Holy Place, the only day of the year that he could enter this dwelling place of God, and sprinkled the blood on top of the Ark of the Covenant. After offering a sacrifice for himself, he could offer a sacrifice for the people. So he went back and did the same thing with a goat—killing it and taking its blood and sprinkling it on the Ark of the Covenant. The ark held the Ten Commandments, which the Lord uses to show us our sin and condemn us. The blood covered over the 10 commandments, as if God couldn't see them. And through that blood God forgave his people. Then the High Priest went back in front of the people and took the left over blood from the goat and spread it all over another goat as he pronounced the sins and

wickedness of the people. The this goat, covered in blood and the sins of the people was taken outside of the camp or city, never to return. This scapegoat symbolized how the sins and guilt of the people was taken away through the blood of the sacrifice and it would never return to haunt them or condemn them.

This day took place year after year. The next year the process was repeated. And for the rest of the days—sacrifices were brought again and again. This went on for thousands of years.

There is a story of a young Jewish boy going to the synagogue to worship—it may have been on the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur. He was old enough to have learned about Yom Kippur and the sacrifices that took place on that day and every day for that matter. When something suddenly dawned on him. He turned to his mother and asked, “Where’s the blood?”

That is the question, isn’t it. Where’s the blood? If the Lord commanded that all of these sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins to take place, then why aren’t they still given day after day and year after year? Jews today would say because they were commanded to give these sacrifices only the temple and since there is no temple, they can’t give these sacrifices. But it is more than that. The answer is found in Christ. The whole purpose of our text is to show how superior Christ is to the Old Testament priests and the sacrifices they made for the people. First let’s focus on the Temple. Day after day they entered the temple and offered sacrifices to the Lord who dwelled above the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place. That temple was destroyed and rebuilt and renovated and expanded until it was eventually destroyed for good in 70 A.D. But Christ when he offered his sacrifice didn’t enter into a man-made place, but he entered into heaven itself! The Temple was made to point us to heaven! Jesus, our Great High Priest, is now in heaven, serving as our intercessor or mediatory before God.

The Old Testament High Priests could not enter God’s presence in the Most Holy Place without blood—the blood of the bull for the sin offering. Jesus too did not enter God’s presence in heaven without shedding some blood. But Jesus didn’t offer up the blood of bulls or goats. He offered up his own blood, the blood of God when he sacrificed himself on the cross. Through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross he paid the ransom price for our sins. He covered over our guilt like the blood that covered the Ark of the Covenant and removed

our sins far from us like the scapegoat. So all of the Old Testament Sacrifices were connected to Christ—God didn’t forgive the sins of the people simply because the blood of some animals was shed, but because those sacrifices pointed to Christ’s sacrifice and were connected to it.

And unlike the Old Testament priests and High Priests, Jesus didn’t have to offer himself up as a perfect sacrifice year after year let alone day after day. He lived a perfect life, suffered, and died only once—for all people of all time—once and for all. He has a better sacrifice than anything the Old Testament Priests had to offer—for he only had to sacrifice himself once and because he is God it is for the forgiveness of everyone who has ever lived! In chapter seven the Writer to the Hebrews put it this way, **Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.**

So what does all of this have to do with this day of the Church year—Last Judgment Sunday? We know that we are all sinners. That is why all those sacrifices were given day after day in the Old Testament. We are all sinners and we cannot save ourselves; we cannot do anything to remove our own sins or pay for them. And we also know that **the wages of sin is death** as Paul says in Romans. And not just physical death, but eternal death as well. For each and every one of our sins we deserve God’s full wrath and punishment, we deserve to suffer forever in the dungeons of hell for our sins.

We also know that when we die we will face judgment. There is no second chances, no other opportunities. When we die we will face judgment from the all-knowing Lord. We will go to heaven or hell, those are the only two options. But we also know that Christ could come soon—at any time the Lord could appear with his angels and a loud trumpet and all people will be gathered before him. And as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed, he will judge the living and the dead. So there is no escaping this judgment. No one ever wants to be taken to court and stand before a judge—most of us would do all we could to avoid such a situation. But there is no way to avoid this judgment—and the worst thing of all is that we know that we are guilty and deserve the full wrath of God’s law.

But that wrath is never going to come upon us because of Christ's sacrifice, which he gave to take away the sins of all people. All people—that includes you and me and everyone else. His sacrifice was for all people of all time. Jesus took each and every sin ever committed upon his shoulders, covering over them by the shedding of his blood on the cross! They are removed far from us. And so John can say in his first letter, **the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

Sure, he will come again. On the Last Day he will come for judgment. But there is no reason to fear that judgment. Sure, we may be guilty, but the guilt of all our sins have been removed by Christ, who suffered through the eternal punishment that we deserved. We stand as pure and innocent in the eyes of the Lord. We can rest assured that because of Christ the Lord considers us pure and innocent, he has already declared us not guilty on account of Christ and he will do the same when we face judgment—whether at our death or on Judgment Day. As Paul says in Romans 8, **there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

And notice what Jesus says in verse 24 of our gospel, **whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.** Through faith, a gift from God, we receive the blessings Christ one for us. And this is not just something we hope to have in the future, this is something we have now—those who believe have eternal life. We have already crossed over from death to life. This is a sure thing, forgiveness and eternal life is ours already!

So there is no reason to fear death or our Day of Judgment. As the Writer to the Hebrews says, **Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 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.** When Christ comes he will come with salvation for all believers. Judgment Day won't be a day of fear and punishment for us, but a day of rejoicing and praising for our Lord has returned to come and take us home. So instead of being afraid of that day, we long for it and speed its coming. We look forward to that day with eager anticipation—for it is a day of rejoicing for all who believe!

Where's the blood? Our worship experience is not like of those who worshiped in the Jerusalem Temple. And for good reason. There is no reason for the bloody sacrifice of animals. Christ sacrificed himself once for all to forgive us and save all. His blood has been shed. So we focus on him and sing his praises. And we eagerly await his return for Judgment, for us it is a day of salvation. Amen.