

Hebrews

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Hebrews 9:23-28

Vss. 23-24

- Remember that the writer of Hebrews holds to the belief that everything we see on earth is but a weak copy of what is in heaven and that includes our worship. The copies here on earth may have sufficed with the blood of animals, but the true worship in heaven requires something more.
- Here on earth, it was just the tabernacle and the altar and the Holy Place that were purified with blood, but with Christ both earth and heaven are purified. And not with the blood of animals but by His own blood. This is the something more. Christ, the Lamb of God, did not enter a tabernacle made with human hands, a mere copy, but instead entered into the true tabernacle of heaven, bringing with Him His own blood for purification. Thus, to say we are Christian does not only mean to say that we have fellowship with one another but also intimate fellowship with God, the Father Himself.
- And one other key point. The danger the High Priest always had to be aware of was the trap of Pride. When you and you alone are worthy to enter into the Holy Place, Pride can be a deadly snare. But Christ did not become both the perfect High Priest, nor offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for His own glory, but He appeared in "the presence of God for **US!**" It was never for Himself. He was already in Heaven with the Father as The Word when He came to earth. Christ had nothing to gain by coming to earth to pay the price for our sin. Yet He did come. And He returned to the Tabernacle of Heaven for us!

Vss. 25-26

- The sacrifice of Christ never needs to be repeated. One point of the superiority of the New Covenant is that it was made once and for all, while under the old way, the High Priest had to make the ritualistic atonement for sin every year. Yet as soon as the Day of Atonement had passed, sin reentered and the path to God was blocked again. With Christ, He has opened the way to God for all eternity, never again to be blocked by sin.

- So much happened that day on Golgotha. Sin was *forever* beaten. No additional sacrifice nor any other work would be required. And with the tearing of the veil of the Temple, literally the path to God was opened. Love had forever overcome sin and death and fear.

Vss. 26-28

- In the era of the Greco-Roman world, the idea of a life after death was not widely held. Most everyone believed that death was the end and there was nothing on the other side of the grave. Among the Romans was the thought of a place called Elysium as a balance to Greek belief in a place called Hades. Elysium was said to be either beautiful fields or islands located on the western edge of the earth, but only the best or most heroic could enter after they were chosen by the gods. Elysium was not available to the common person. Most people held no view of an afterlife, never mind any hope.
- So the idea that a person lives and after death comes the judgement was a radical idea at the time. Here we see, as CS Lewis points out, there is no such thing as a mortal person. Because we are each created with the spark of God, with the breath of God, then we are all immortal. The only question is where we will spend eternity.
- With Christ alone the story is different. He came, He died, He rose alive from the grave and ascended into Heaven, and He will come again as God's righteous judge. To the believer the Second Coming, the Day of the Lord, will be a day of unspeakable joy. To the unbeliever the Day of the Lord will be a day of unspeakable terror. What we do with Jesus in this life is directly related to what Jesus will do with us in the life to come.