

Hebrews 9:24-28

Last Judgment; November 7 & 8, 2021

My wife calls it: *“Adams-time.”* I call it taking more time to get the job done right. You know -- It’s that time difference between what I think a project is going to take to do and the time that it takes to actual do that task. Not only will the project take longer to do, but it may also require a couple of trips to Menards and Home Depot. If I can’t find it at those stores, I may end up making trips to several other stores. If those result in failure, then I will go to my Amazon Prime account and see how fast I can get whatever I might need. Once I have invested a good amount of time into that project, then I get stubborn. *“I’m going to finish this project today, even if it means staying up longer than I should. “Adams-time.”* Anyone understand exactly what I am talking about? Sometimes, I am successful; sometimes, I am not.

I think there is a part of us that thinks that we can solve any problem that life may throw at us, including the problem of sin. Even though I might love to use duct tape to fix something temporally, duct tape is rarely a permanent fix. It might slow down a leak in a pipe for a short time, but it doesn’t fix the problem. The leak can only be fixed by replacing the pipe. The same could be said about us. We might think that we can fix the problem of sin by doing some good things to cover sin up, but we can’t fix the problem of sin. For that problem to be fixed, it needs to be removed and replaced. That “something else” is Jesus, or as the writer to the Hebrews writes earlier in his letter: **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”** (Heb. 4:15-16)

In our text this morning, we read these words: **“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”** Why would Jesus do this? God wants people to know just how much he loves them. His love began in the Garden of Eden and he has never stopped. Throughout the pages of Scripture God reminds us again and again and again that he was going to fix the problem of sin through a sacrifice. But the sacrifice needed to be more than the sacrifice of animals. The whole point of the Book of Hebrews is that Jesus is the sacrifice that is superior to any sacrifice that we would offer from this world.

Sacrifices had always been the part of the worship life of the Israelites. God could not overlook sin. As the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: **“For the wages of sin is death.”** (Romans 6:23) Yet, if God had stopped there we would be lost. But he didn’t stop there. **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Yet, even though the children of Israel in the Old Testament would never see that gift of Jesus with their own eyes, the tabernacle was a very vivid way that God pointed ahead to that One who would come to fix the problem of sin.

After God had rescued the children of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, he commanded Moses to construct the tabernacle. God wanted to live among his people. The tabernacle would be that place. There they could worship God and God would dwell among his people. The tabernacle was filled with object lessons. None of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was by accident. God was very specific in his instructions on what was to be done, and when, and how. It was a way that God provided for the people to deal with their sins – to have the assurance that their sins were atoned for. Those sacrifices and rituals weren't just for show – they really counted! God so promised that. All those sacrifices were a foreshadow of something much greater was coming. The priests, the sacrifices, the Tabernacle, ... all of these were shadows of the salvation of God that came in Jesus Christ.

No other place in the tabernacle illustrated that more than the Most Holy Place for God’s people to see the price that needed to pay for sin. No one could enter that room. No sinful being could stand before the Almighty and Holy God. Yet, God provided a way for that to happen in the Most Holy Place. For someone to stand before God, a sacrifice needed to be made. That sacrifice could only be made by one person, the High Priest, once a year, on the Day of Atonement. As that High Priest would enter that room, he would see the Ark of the Covenant in the center of that room. In that Ark were things that showed how much God had loved his people. There was a gold jar of manna to remind the children of Israel how God had provided food for his people in the wilderness. There was the staff of Aaron, the First High Priest, and the tablets of stone on which God had written the Ten Commandments. Moses was instructed by God how the cover on the Ark would be made. **“Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and**

a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law that I will give you. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” (Exodus 25:17-22) It would be on that gold cover the High Priest would sprinkle the blood from the animal that had been sacrificed, first of all, for his own sins and, then, the sins of the people.

Yet, there was one thing this sacrifice on the Day of Atonement could not do – it could not permanently remove the guilt of all sin. Year after year, sacrifices had to be made. As soon as the people rejoiced about their sins being forgiven, they were already guilty about their new sins. No blood of animals could remove the guilt of sin once and for all. This entire Old Testament worship system all pointed to the one who would pay for sin once and for all. **“So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”**

After Jesus made that sacrifice for all people, what did Jesus do? **“For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. 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.”** Jesus has walked up to the throne of God and declared that the sin of the world has been paid for in full. The greatest news – he’s done this **“FOR US.”** Jesus gives us the answer to the question – *“Are you ready to die and stand before Jesus?”* with the answer: **“YES!”**

Even though we might try to avoid talking about it or try to ignore it, we will all face it. We all will die. When that day of Last Judgment comes we can look forward to that day with joy. How many of you came here today all excited to celebrate Last Judgment Sunday? (How many didn’t even know that today was Last Judgment Sunday?) Today is probably not high on anyone’s list of favorite worship days.

My wife keeps a running “to do list” for me on projects that need to be done. There are a few things on that list that have been on it for a year or two already. I’m not sure it will ever be finished. Will I do more projects in *“Adams-time?”* Yes, probably. But there is one thing that I know is complete. The problem of sin had been fixed permanently and perfectly in Jesus. It’s done by our Great High Priest, Jesus. Go and live in the peace. Amen.