

Jesus Christ, Our High Priest

Once For All

The LORD promised on the Day of Atonement to cleanse His people from all of their sins. It is this distinguishing feature that made this Day unique. “For on this Day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the LORD” (Leviticus 16:30). The LORD had redeemed His people; He subsequently required them to be cleansed from their sin. Leviticus 16 describes the most complex yearly ritual for the purification and riddance of sin in all of Scripture.

The “Day” referred to in Leviticus 16:30 was when the LORD permitted Israel’s high priest to enter into the Holy of Holies. He allowed entrance into His holy presence only one day during the calendar year. If anyone other than the high priest entered, or if anyone attempted to enter His immediate presence at any other time, they were killed as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron.¹

Leviticus records that the LORD required His people to come before Him on that Day; it was a Divine convocation (Leviticus 23:26-32). It was both their duty and privilege to attend. Including the priests, no one was excused to be absent and disobey the LORD’s summons. Moreover, the LORD declared this Day “a sabbath of complete rest” (Leviticus 16:31).² On this Day, all were forbidden to perform any manner of labor, including all other priests. This prohibition included the preparation of food for subsistence; for this Day was a fast day and not a feast day. If anyone did perform labor on the Day of Atonement, the outcome was too dreadful and feared: they were cut off from the people (Leviticus 16:31; 23:26-32).

¹ Leviticus 16:1 refers to the incident in Leviticus 10:1-7 wherein Nadab and Abihu attempted to enter into the holy sanctuary “and fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD” (v. 2). Like the narrative of Korah in Numbers, chapters 16—17, the narrative about Nadab and Abihu served as an admonition and as an object lesson. No one but the high priest, and only on the Day of Atonement, was permitted to enter into the holy sanctuary, the holy presence of the LORD.

² Literally, the LORD declared the Day of Atonement as a *shabbat shabbaton*. The combination of these two words has the force of a superlative. The Day of Atonement was regarded as the holiest of all days.

It was Israel's high priest's official duty on the Day of Atonement to enter twice into the Holy of Holies, first to offer a combined sin-offering for himself and the other priests (Leviticus 16:3, 6, 11-14), and then again to offer a sin-offering for the people (Leviticus 16:5, 7-9, 15, 20-22). Thus, Israel's high priest was required to enter the Holy of Holies twice on the Day of Atonement.

However, after the ascension of Jesus Christ and His appointment by God as our High Priest, the author of Hebrews states that He only entered the heavenly Holy of Holies once. This discordance between the earthly high priest's two-fold entrance and that of Jesus' into the heavenly Holy Place should raise the question, "Why did Jesus enter only once into the Holy of Holies and not twice?"

Let us begin to answer this question by reading Hebrews 9:11-12 where the author states that Jesus entered into the Holy Place once.

Hebrews 9:11-12

"¹¹But 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; ¹²and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained everlasting redemption."

The earthly ritual was a picture, a shadow of the "good things to come" when Israel's high priest entered into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. When the author says, "the good things to come", it was from the perspective of those living under the First Covenant. We will discuss later in this series what entails "the good things to come".

The reason Jesus entered into the heavenly inner Sanctuary once and not twice like the high priests into the earthly sanctuary, was due to His sinlessness as expounded by the author of *Hebrews* earlier in his letter. At this time, I direct our attention to the following verses of Scripture. The first two references are from *Hebrews*, and the last one from Apostle Paul.

Hebrews 4:15

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.”

Whereas we may be very familiar with Jesus’ temptation by the devil after His forty days of fasting, pressure to fail dogged His steps during His entire ministry. Jesus stated to His apostles in the Upper Room, “You are those who have stood by Me in My trials” (Luke 22:28).

Hebrews 7:26-27

“²⁶For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

The English phrase “once for all” translates the Greek adverb *ephápax* (ἐφάπαξ). As in Hebrews 9:12, it denotes in this context an action *taking place once and to the exclusion of any further occurrence, once for all, once and never again* (BDAG, s.v. ἐφάπαξ; cf. Romans 6:10). The adverb answers the question “How often?” and expresses Jesus’ actions when He offered once His substitutionary sin-offering (Hebrews 7:27; 10:10) and then entered once into the Holy Place (Hebrews 9:12).

2 Corinthians 5:21

“He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin *to be* a sin-offering on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Wholly dissimilar to earthly high priests, Jesus Christ had no personal sin which required cleansing before His entrance into the Holy of Holies for the propitiation of His peoples’ sins. When He entered into Holy Place, it was not for His sake, but for the purpose, “to make [present infinitive] propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus asked His contemporaries, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46). Who could possibly pose such a question and expect silence? We would be rebuffed by those who know us best, and heckled by others. There would not be silence, but the appropriate and justifiable response of laughter by all. This was never in the case of Jesus, the sinless Son of God, by those who knew Him.

Peter, who knew Jesus well, declared that He “committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:22-23). The apostle John wrote, “in Him is no sin” (1 John 4:5). Even the demons cried out, “I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” (Luke 4:34). Also, those who did not know Jesus well regarded Him as a righteous man (Matthew 27:19). The greatest testimony, however, comes from God when He raised Jesus from the dead because He is the Holy One (Acts 2:24-32; 13:35).

None of us have been in the presence of a sinless being. We can only imagine how a sinless individual would behave. The scriptural testimony is that Jesus did and said the appropriate thing at the appropriate time. At all times, He avoided the evil, and did what was right, and therefore never violated the holy commandments of the Law. Even in the most trying circumstance of His life, He maintained uniform self-control and inward peace. He addressed to His apostles the reassuring words only a short few hours before His heart-wrenching crucifixion, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27).

Many of those who were Jesus’ contemporaries did experience His sinless perfection, and some of those desired to kill Him. He exposed their lies because He did not conceal the truth with half-lies and unholy conduct. He never hid His agenda, for He spoke the words and did the works of His Father. The focus of Jesus’ message was the same wherever He went, for He said, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I

was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43). And what did He receive for doing so? Isaiah the prophet speaks of its intermediate outcome in chapter 53.

“³He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

“⁴Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.”

“⁵But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.”

“⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.”

Some of those to whom Isaiah refers, abandoned Jesus at the hour of His death. Peter being the representative of the apostles vowed just hours beforehand, “*Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!*” And they all were saying the same thing also” (Mark 14:31). But all of His apostles did deny knowing Him, and all fell away as Jesus had predicted. If we had been present, we would have done the same; for it was in the infinite wisdom of God that the holy, innocent and undefiled One of God was to pay for the penalty for the sins of the many—abandoned and alone.

From what has been discussed thus far, we may discern the reason the LORD instructed Israel’s high priest to offer a separate and distinct sin-offering for his own sins, and another for the sins of his people. If the LORD had not, the shadow of “the good things to come” would have

corresponded incorrectly with its future heavenly reality when Jesus Christ, the holy, innocent, undefiled One entered only once into the presence of God as our High Priest to make propitiation for His people.

All earthly high priests were laden with their own sin, and therefore required first to make their own sin-offering before that of the people. This mandated the high priest to enter twice into the holy place. However, we have a High Priest, although “tested in all things as we are, yet is without sin”. He alone is the One who is “holy, innocent, undefiled, and separated from sinners”. Therefore, there was no need for Him first to enter and offer His sin-offering.³ Jesus entered “the Holy Place once for all”, not because of His sin, but to make propitiation for the sins of His people.

Jesus Christ’s High Priesthood is a further demonstration of His selflessness. No other purpose is served by His presence in the Holy Sanctuary other than to make propitiation for the sins of His people. On the other hand, the earthly high priest had two purposes for entering into the Holy Place; once to make propitiation for his sins and those of the other priests, and again to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Jesus’ purpose for entering once into the presence of God and remaining there is exclusively for our benefit. His selfless substitutionary death for our sin at Calvary is familiar; however His faithful and altruistic ministry as our great High Priest as the propitiation for those sins is not.

Jesus entered once into the Holy Sanctuary to make propitiation for sin. From that time onward, He has remained in the Holy of Holies. He has never emerged to make another sin-offering of any kind. How is this possible? Jesus suffered once for sin, and then subsequent to His

³ Israel’s high priest first offered a joint sin-offering for himself and for the other priests on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:6, 11-14), and then a different one for the people (Leviticus 16:7-9, 15-17). This has severe practical consequences for those who profess to be priests today. Since Jesus did not offer a sin-offering for Himself and therefore not one for any priest, then those who presently profess to be priests are not included in the sin-offering which He currently mediates in the Holy Sanctuary. He offered only one sin-offering, and it was ONLY on the behalf of the people. Those who will reign as priests during His kingdom will be taken from the faithful, just as they were in Israel (1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 1:6). Today, there is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

resurrection and ascension offered His sacrifice for sin to God. God accepted His payment as being completely worthy for the penalty for sin. Therefore, this made it possible for Jesus to enter once into the Holy of Holies to make propitiation for the sins of His people as High Priest, and to remain there until His work has been fully accomplished.

In addition to the sin-offerings mediated in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, Israel's priests also mediated other sin-offerings for the people during the year (Leviticus 4:1—7:38). Hebrews 7:25-27 is cited again to underscore that Jesus' sin-offering was offered once for His people, and that the efficacy of His sacrifice is also for their daily sins.

Hebrews 7:26-27

“²⁶For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

Jesus' payment for sin once for all satisfies God's righteous requirements for the penalty for sin. What is the proof of this? Christ entered once into the Holy of Holies and sat down at the right hand of God as High Priest—never again to offer another sin-offering, whether to secure His peoples' redemption or propitiation.

Jesus Christ did not suffer death as the substitutionary victim on the Day of Atonement, but on Passover which pertains to redemption. His present ministry as High Priest in the Holy Place concerns the forgiveness and cleansing of God's people from their sin and not their redemption. Having secured their redemption, Jesus' present ministry is to make propitiation for His peoples' sins so that they may be forgiven and cleansed from them. Jesus' substitutionary death for sin redeemed a people for God and also is capable of cleaning His people from their sins.

Hebrews 9:11-12

“¹¹But 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; ¹²and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained everlasting redemption.”

Those who are redeemed by Christ’s blood are those who need to be cleansed and forgiven by the same. However, redemption (the act whereby God secures a people for His own possession by sacrificial blood) and propitiation (the act whereby God’s redeemed are cleansed and forgiven by sacrificial blood) are not synonymous terms. The distinction may be discerned from the historical perspective when God first redeemed the Israelites in Egypt at which time there was no tabernacle, no priesthood, and no worship in Egypt; then several months after crossing the Red Sea, propitiation was required because of their disobedience to God.

All those who departed Egypt and passed through the Red Sea on dry ground had already been redeemed by God. After seeing the bodies of the Egyptians washing upon the seashore, they sang a song to the LORD, praising Him for what He had done.

Exodus 15:13

“In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; in Your strength You have guided *them* to Your holy habitation.”

Many centuries later, the psalmist extols the LORD’s mighty acts which He performed in the presence of a people whom He redeemed out of Egypt.

Psalms 78:42

“They did not remember His power, the day when He [the LORD] redeemed them from the adversary.”

And again the psalmist says,

Psalm 106:9-12

“⁹Thus He [the LORD] rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,
and He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.”

“¹⁰So He delivered them from the hand of the one who hated *them*,
and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.”

“¹¹The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.”

“¹²Then they believed His works;
they sang His praise.”

The Exodus event speaks of the LORD redeeming a people as His own possession, representative when He instructed His people to smear the lamb's blood on their doorposts to prevent the Angel of Death from slaying the firstborn. The Passover animals that the Hebrews sacrificed foreshadowed Jesus' redemptive sacrifice on Passover: “For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7b). It is by His blood we are redeemed: “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The LORD secured the Israelite's redemption while they were still in Egypt (Exodus 15:13; cf. Psalm 78:42; Isaiah 63:9). The LORD performed this gracious act before there was an earthly tabernacle in the wilderness and before He had appointed Aaron as high priest to make propitiation for their sins in the Holy of Holies. Subsequent to their rebellion against Him in the wilderness as redeemed people, He required them to be cleansed from their sin before approaching Him in worship. Redemption does not require propitiation for sin; however to approach the LORD in worship by faith requires personal confession of and cleansing from sin. The mediatorial high priesthood ministry of Aaron performed this propitiatory cleansing for the LORD's redeemed people on the Day of Atonement.

Just as God required Israel's earthly high priest to come into His presence to offer the sin-offering's blood which cleansed His redeemed people, it was also required of Jesus Christ as our High Priest to enter into the heavenly Holy Sanctuary to make propitiation for the redeemed (Hebrews 9:6-23). If He had not, the redeemed could not be cleansed and forgiven of sins. Redeemed—Yes! Forgiven and cleansed—No!

The services of a priest are solely for the redeemed people of God. Those who are not redeemed do not receive any benefit from those services. The tabernacle and priesthood were ordained by God only for a people redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb. In like manner, the Priesthood of the Son of God is solely for those who have been redeemed by the His precious blood, the Paschal Lamb.

The service which Israel's high priest performed, and which other priests could not perform, was to offer the propitiatory sin-offering on the behalf of the people on the Day of Atonement. As the author of *Hebrews* reminds his readers, "but into the second [Holy Place], only the high priest *enters* once a year, not without *taking* blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance" (Hebrews 9:7). This unique ministration of the high priest served as a solemn type when Jesus entered into the heavenly Holy Place with His blood as High Priest.

As long as Jesus remains in the Holy of Holies, we may have confidence to approach and worship a holy God. Our confident approach is based ONLY on Jesus who offered once His substitutionary sin-offering for all of our sin when He entered once into the Holy of Holies to make the propitiation for that sin. As the author of *Hebrews* states in chapter 10 and verses 19-23:

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our

bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

The author exhorts his readers to “draw near”. This approach is to be “with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith”. The verb “draw near” does not refer contextually to a spatial nearness, but one of attitude, “with a sincere heart”. He is not exhorting his readers to come closer to God in the Holy of Holies; for that privilege belongs only to the man Christ Jesus. He alone is permitted in the presence of God as our High Priest.

The concept “to draw near” refers to when God’s people approach Him in worship. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the LORD’s people who did not worship Him in the fashion He desired when they drew near.

Isaiah 29:13

“Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their fear for Me consists of tradition learned.’”

The phrase “this people” also occurs in Isaiah 6:10 and 8:11. It is used when the LORD desires to distance Himself from His people’s attitudes and decisions. Their religion—their worship of the LORD—had become only verbal. It was not from the heart. This affected the character of their worship. Instead of worship founded on a divinely inspired awe and deep respect for the Holy One, it had become “a human command” which can be taught and recited without involving the heart. “The fear of the LORD” is not only the beginning of wisdom, but also the foundation of a continuing worship which MUST involve the heart of the worshipper.

The author of *Hebrews* exhorts his readers to seize the opportunity of their access to God “in full assurance of faith” (verse 22). What was to be the content of their faith? Their access is only possible because Christ entered once into the Holy of Holies, being firmly based on what He offered once—His substitutionary blood sacrifice for ALL the sins of His people.

For this reason, he further exhorts his readers to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (v. 23).

The matter of drawing near to God is exceedingly important, for by it, a redeemed individual becomes a worshipper. Their privilege and duty are clear. The benefits resulting from the constant exercise of that privilege are exceedingly great. The possible loss to be incurred by neglecting it is likewise extremely great.

In the 21st Century, we (especially we who are Gentiles) are not accustomed of thinking that our access to God is mediated through a high priest. However, at the time during which the New Testament was written, the readers were very familiar with it. They were also very familiar that confession of personal sin accompanied the priest’s mediatorial service.

Leviticus 5:5-6

“⁵So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. ⁶He shall also bring his guilt offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a sin-offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin.”

When the worshipper approached God with the innocent victim as his substitute for him in death, he first confessed the committed sin. He knew the act which constituted sin deserved death, the penalty suffered by the innocent victim. After he had confessed his sin, the priest made atonement on his behalf for his sin.

Because of sin, the holy, innocent and undefiled Victim, who knew no sin, Christ Jesus became the sin-offering for His people. He did this once, just as He being our High Priest entered once into the Holy of Holies. What remains for the worshipper is to confess their sin when approaching God with a sincere heart.

We have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, who presently appears in the presence of God on our behalf. His sin-offering and presence in the Holy of Holies before God guarantees that a sin will not be committed by His people that His sin-offering and ministry as High Priest will not be able to cleanse and satisfy God's absolute holy and righteous standard. God will ALWAYS be faithful and righteous to forgive our sin when we confess them to Him. Therefore, those who draw near with a sincere heart have the duty and privilege to confess their sin to Him.

1 John 1:7-2:2

⁷“but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. ^{2:1}My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.”

Because of Jesus' substitutionary death, we are redeemed. He died on Passover to secure a redeemed people for God. At that time, Jesus was not our High Priest. Also because of the same substitutionary death for sin, we may be forgiven and cleansed from our sin. This is the purpose for Jesus' ongoing propitiatory ministry at the present time, which He selflessly performs in the Holy of Holies for us. God's people—the redeemed—may receive cleansing twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, and fifty-two weeks a year when they confess their sin to God.

God's people require His forgiveness and cleansing from their daily sin. However, if we deceive ourselves that “we have no sin” (1 John 1:7) which God declares to be sin, or that “we have not sinned” (1 John 1:10)

when He convicts us of our sin, then we will not confess our sin and will also regard the High Priestly ministry of Christ Jesus as unnecessary.

However, when we humble ourselves before God and confess our sin, then “He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What is the basis for God forgiving our sin? It is based on Jesus’ substitutionary death at Calvary which He offered once. It is equally important and true that Jesus as our High Priest entered once into the Holy Sanctuary where He is [present tense] the propitiation for our sins. Thus, God is able to be faithful and righteous to forgive and to cleanse us from all of our sin when we confess them to Him.

Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins is never to be repeated; for the efficacy of the propitiatory blood of Christ abides. However, the confession of our sins as they occur is our continuing duty and responsibility as a worshipper. As long as we have breath and Jesus remains in the heavenly Holy Sanctuary, we have opportunity to confess our sin and to be cleansed when we draw near with a sincere heart. God guarantees that we will not only be cleansed from the sins we confess, but from all unrighteousness. Jesus Christ has provided the righteous ground whereon God can deal with His people in grace according to the desire of His purpose.

We have the assurance that God forgives us for the sins we confess. However, we do not know nor are we conscious of all our sin. Therefore, God does not only forgive and cleanse us from the sins we confess, but “He is faithful and righteous also to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS”. He is righteous in doing so because the penalty for sin has been paid, and He who made the propitiation for that sin, Jesus Christ the righteous, has entered once into the Holy Sanctuary as our Advocate and sits at God’s right hand at the present time. However, this will not always be the case.

Jesus entered once into the Holy Sanctuary as the propitiation for our sins, “having been offered once to bear the sins of many”. One day He will come forth and “appear a second time”. Once He emerges, He will never

enter into the Holy of Holies again, just as He will never again suffer for sin. Jesus suffered once for sin; likewise He entered once into the Holy Place. When Christ our High Priest does appear, it will be “for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him” (Hebrews 9:28).

When Jesus emerges from the Holy Sanctuary (or at our death) it will be too late to confess our sins, for our High Priest can only accomplish the propitiation for sins while He remains in the Holy of Holies.⁴ Let us seize the opportunity to draw near with a sincere heart, “so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

As worshippers of the holy God, it is our duty and privilege to draw near to Him with a sincere heart as it was for the Israelites on the Day of Atonement. However, we may not take advantage of God’s grace confidently to approach Him with a sincere heart and confess our sin because we feel too dirty before Him. We incorrectly think that we have committed a sin so terrible that He will not forgive us.

However, our dreadful inaction of not drawing near with confidence and confessing our sin actually reveals our evil heart. We do not believe by faith what God has solemnly declared. It was He who appointed Christ Jesus as our High Priest to make propitiation for our sin, based upon His substitutionary sacrificial death on our behalf. Since it was God who did this, we may rest assured that when we approach Him with a sincere heart, He will forgive and cleanse us from our sins. This is not based on how we feel, but upon His faithfulness to do what He has promised.

⁴ Understanding that Jesus will never again enter the Holy of Holies once He departs has significant implications. For example, many teach that Jesus comes for the Church before the events of the Seals and Trumpets as described in *Revelation*. However, if Jesus exits the Holy of Holies and resurrects those who are His BEFORE the events of the Seals and the Trumpets, then the redeemed during this period will have no hope of their sins propitiated; for Jesus entered once into the Holy of Holies to make propitiation; this He will never do again. It is best to understand 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as pertaining to the resurrection of all Christ’s people whether dead (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16) or alive (1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). When the Seventh Trumpet sounds, it signals Christ’s appearance and inauguration of His kingdom (Revelation 11:15-19), at which time He raises and transforms all those who are His in a moment of time. The Bowls of Wrath will be poured upon the earth after the initial 1000 years of Christ’s kingdom when Satan is released from the Abyss for a “short time”.

The most probable reason we will not draw near to God with a sincere heart is because of an activity which we are doing contrary to godly living. Although the Scriptures declare our behavior as sin, we refuse immediately to halt it. We choose not to stop our illicit behavior since it is deceitfully enjoyable. Therefore, with moral numbness we exchange drawing near to God with a sincere heart for temporal pleasures that invigorates and excites our senses. Soon we become dangerously indifferent to God.

We rarely consider the far-reaching consequences for our sin. Instead of drawing near with a sincere heart, we alternatively fall away from the living God because of our stubborn choices of disobedience, and therefore become increasingly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). The author of *Hebrews* warns his readers, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). He forewarns the consequence of an evil and unbelieving heart; they are those who have fallen away from the living God.

Sin is our environment. It envelops and thrusts its desires upon us. It is deceitful. Like a seductress Siren, it allures us with false expectation. Sin is deceitful because its sensuous charisma has the appearance of being harmless and innocent—and not what it ultimately yields—unfruitful, perverse and wicked actions, all of which produces a callous heart. An evil and unbelieving heart toward God does not immediately occur, but eventually, and this is where the deception of sin lies.

None of us wake up one morning and say, "I think I will fall away from the living God today." However, what does happen is that "¹⁴each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (James 1:14-15). Because sin is deviously pleasurable, we obstinately refuse to confess it. If we do not confess it as improper behavior, we do not acknowledge what it is—sin, and therefore do not repent and turn away from it.

On the other hand, if we acknowledge what God has declared unholy, we turn away from the evil in favor to do what is right—no matter how much we have enjoyed the sin. We do this by faith because God has declared it to be sin, and not what we may gain temporally by our unholy conduct.

For whatever reason we do not confess our sin, we are not forgiven. Although redeemed—having been “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10), we will be severely punished as His people, for we have insulted God by refusing His method by which we may approach Him to be cleansed and forgiven of our sin.

The tabernacle and the services of the priests in the wilderness were for all the redeemed congregation of Israel. Nevertheless, each Israelite was responsible to avail themselves of their privileges. God graciously provided all that was needed to approach Him in worship. It was only because of a cauterized heart the redeemed did not, and substituted their own prescription for worship in place of the commands of God as the supreme authority in matters of worship of Him.

Let us read with clarity what Scripture states as the judgment if we do not seize the opportunity to draw near to God with a sincere heart, and not hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. After assuring that Jesus’ offering for sin and ministry as our High Priest is sufficient to cleanse us from our sin when we approach God with a sincere heart, the author of *Hebrews* says the following.

Hebrews 10:26-31

“²⁶For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

²⁸Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was

sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.' ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The same ones who "have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10), are the same to whom this very serious declaration is directed. Let us therefore not underestimate how vital and serious it is to draw near with a sincere heart and hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

How can the writer state "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"? The answer is supplied in the conditional statement, "if we go on sinning willfully AFTER RECEIVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH". The knowledge of the truth is what the author has presented in his letter which entirely revolved around the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Of all the special days that the LORD instructed Israel to observe, our author focuses on the Day of Atonement, at which time only the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies. This they would do until "the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:10). "The time of reformation" began when Jesus entered once into the Holy of Holies as our sin substitute and High Priest.

The earthly high priest on the Day of Atonement appeared before the LORD on the behalf of his people. He performed his yearly ritual in an earthly shadowy copy of the heavenly tabernacle—and only once during the calendar year. When he mediated the propitiatory sin-offering on the behalf of his people, the ritual foreshadowed an event in the heavenly tabernacle, a future event of such magnitude that they could have scarcely possibly ever imagined. The deeper and truer significance is realized in Jesus' propitiatory ministry as our High Priest in the heavenly Holy Sanctuary. That which the Day of Atonement foreshadowed was fulfilled when Jesus entered once into the heavenly Holy of Holies on the merit of His offering which He offered once for the sins of His redeemed people.

Jesus Christ has entered once into the heavenly Holy of Holies. “The time of reformation” has begun and He is the High Priest of “the good things to come” of which the earthly tabernacle and ritual foreshadowed. For what reason did Jesus Christ enter into the heavenly tabernacle into the Holy of Holies? The author of *Hebrews* says it is “to make propitiation [present infinitive] for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). This is consistent to the purpose the earthly high priest entered into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement on the behalf of the people. As long as He is secluded in the Holy of Holies, Jesus Christ’s present ministry as High Priest is to make propitiation for our sins.

However, if we do not dispose ourselves to the ministry of the High Priest, what is left? “There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (v. 26). If we do not draw near with a sincere heart and hold fast to our confession, what should we expect “but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries” (v. 27). Those who do not avail themselves to the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ can expect to be judged and only punished as the LORD’s adversaries.

The author cites scriptural proof: “anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*” (v. 28).⁵ Since physical death was the just punishment, “how much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (v. 29).

The author uses three substantive participles that are unified by one Greek article. The three descriptive actions are cumulative in force and refer to the one and same who has (1) trampled underfoot the Son of God; (2) regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was

⁵ The author’s abbreviated quotation probably comes from Deuteronomy 17:6. The context references apostasy (vv. 2f.). Deuteronomy 19:15 may also be his reference since it follows a passage that distinguishes sins of ignorance (v. 4) from deliberate sins (v. 11). In any case, the author’s main interest is in the provision of the death penalty, and not with the danger of miscarriage of justice.

sanctified; and (3) insulted the Spirit of grace. These three expressions probably reflect the “two or three witnesses” in verse 28.

How does one trample underfoot the Son of God and regard as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and insult the Spirit of grace? From the overall context of *Hebrews*, these actions suggest utter disregard for what Jesus is presently doing for them in the Holy of Holies. The only means of drawing near with confidence to God is Jesus Christ. Thus, God’s retribution will be extraordinarily severe toward those who are His people and attempt to worship Him by any other means than the High Priest whom He has appointed.

The author asks a rhetorical question: “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve?”—compared to those who died physically without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses* (v. 28). The obvious answer is something greater than physical death—a punishment certain to be experienced at the resurrection. The author has already stated, “it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Those who do not confront their sin now will face certain judgment when Christ appears and resurrects those who are His.

The scriptural paradigm for the resurrection when Christ appears the second time is first found in Daniel 12:2: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but these to disgrace and everlasting abhorrence.” Those who both “sleep in the dust of the ground” and “will awake” are the “many”. This resurrection includes a portion of the dead who will be raised, for it is the “many” of those who sleep in the dust of the ground who will awake, and not all the dead. Also the “many” who are raised are not distinguished whether they will awake or not, but by the outcome.⁶ Thus, it is evident that Daniel prophesied only one resurrection when he looked toward the eschatological horizon.

⁶ For further information concerning this resurrection which is distinguished and mutually exclusive of those who will be raised at the great white throne, go [here](#).

When Paul wrote extensively centuries later about the resurrection, it was not incongruent with Daniel's prophecy. The "many" in Daniel 12:2 constitutes those who are Christ's at His coming. Neither Daniel nor Paul was aware of any other resurrection. Speaking of the resurrection, Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:23-24:

“²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, ²⁴then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.”

Paul mentions only two resurrections, first Christ's and then those who are His at His coming.⁷ He does not offer the slightest hint that anyone else is included in the aforementioned resurrections; for subsequent to those who are resurrected at Christ's coming, “then comes the end, when He [Christ] hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power”.

Another resurrection, however, is recorded in *Revelation*, one that was not revealed to Daniel⁸ or Paul. It was not known until revealed to the Apostle John. Furthermore, this resurrection occurs subsequently after Satan's one thousand year captivity in the Abyss (cf. Revelation 20:1-3, 7),⁹ a period of time that also was not known to any scriptural author until

⁷ These resurrections are different in nature than those who were temporally resurrected and then died again (such as Lazarus). Paul later qualifies that the resurrection transforms the physical body into an imperishable and spiritual resurrected body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Furthermore, the “mystery” that what was not previously revealed to the prophets was that those who were Christ's and alive at His coming would also be transformed to an imperishable, spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

⁸ Daniel's prophesy does not include the resurrection of any Gentiles or their participation in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. This we would expect since “the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:4b-6).

⁹ It is from this period of time that the phrase “millennial kingdom” (< Latin *mille* “thousand”) mistakenly arose pertaining to the duration of Christ's reign. The thousand years ONLY pertains to the duration of Satan's captivity in the Abyss, and not to the entire duration of Christ's reign. Before Satan is cast into the Abyss, Christ's kingdom is inaugurated (Revelation 11:15-19; 19:11-21). After the one thousand years of captivity, Satan is released “for a short time”, concurrent with Christ's continuing reign, and during which time Satan deceives the nations again (Revelation 20:7). Subsequently, Christ will cast Satan into the Lake of Fire where he and the beast and false prophet are tormented “into the ages” (Revelation 19:20; 20:10). All of this activity simultaneously occurs during Jesus' reign. However, His reign extends after these events, in fact into the ages (Luke 1:33; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 11:15).

revealed to John as recorded in the *Revelation*. Daniel 12:2 refers only to the “many” who will be raised; however that resurrection leaves a portion of those who “sleep in the dust of the ground” until John records another resurrection concerning “the rest of the dead” in Revelation 20:5, 11-15 who appear before the great white throne. Thus, the two resurrections as prophesied in Daniel 12:2 and Revelation 20:5, 11-15 are different.

Those raised when Jesus appears “a second time” also come into view in Revelation 20:4. However, these do not represent all of the “many” in Daniel 12:2 but only those who participate in His kingdom. Instead of “disgrace and everlasting abhorrence”, the administration of justice is given to them and they reign with Christ.

“Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

These are they who will also be “priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6c). Thus, what the Apostle John sees in the vision as recorded in Revelation 20:4 represents only the redeemed of those participating in Christ’s kingdom; all others have been forcibly removed from the kingdom and thus excluded from the vision.

What happens to the others who are redeemed and awakened? They are awakened to “disgrace and everlasting abhorrence”.¹⁰ Redeemed—Yes! Rulers with Christ in His kingdom—No! It is revealed to their horror and shame that they are not the “wheat” but the “tares”, and forcefully removed from His kingdom. Jesus spoke of this event and forewarned the outcome: “⁴¹The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit

¹⁰ The adjective “everlasting” does not suggest time without end, but an undetermined duration of time, whether in the phrases “everlasting life” or “everlasting abhorrence”.

lawlessness,⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42).¹¹

How may we determine for certain that the “tares” are counted among the “many” that are resurrected? We may know for sure because Jesus contextually alludes to Daniel 12:3 concerning those who will participate in the kingdom in contradistinction to the aforementioned. “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43).

Thus, as far as revealed in *Daniel*, those who constitute the “many” all awake in the same resurrection. They are then separated into two different groups that will experience very dissimilar outcomes in the resurrection. As may be expected, this is exactly what Jesus repeatedly taught. Consider the *Parable of the Marriage Feast* (Matthew 22:1-14). Why is it at this feast some are allowed to participate and others are not? Why is it that the one whom Jesus called “friend” (verse 12) is bound hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth? How did that individual arrive at the feast in the first place if he was dead? The only possible solution is that he was one of the “many”—a redeemed individual—who was resurrected and then compulsorily removed from the kingdom and therefore not permitted to join in with the festivities.¹²

During His ministry, Jesus (as well as all others) only spoke about the resurrection that had been revealed in Scripture. The resurrection that had been revealed pertained only to the “many”— not ALL—in Daniel 12:2. The fate concerning “the rest of the dead” was not known until revealed to the Apostle John much later as recorded in Revelation 20:5, 11-15. It is only then that it was revealed that “the rest of the dead” are resurrected and appear before the great white throne AFTER Christ’s initial one

¹¹The author of *Hebrews* states it in this manner: “a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:27).

¹²The scriptural authors severely warned repeatedly that those who are redeemed but live rebellious lives will not inherit the kingdom. For example, the Apostle Paul states in Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

thousand year reign, AFTER Satan deceives again the nations and AFTER Satan is casted into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:7, 10).

In summary, those whom Christ resurrects at His coming are the same as the “many” in Daniel 12:2. They are then separated into two different groups that experience very dissimilar outcomes; either they awaken “to everlasting life” or “to disgrace and everlasting abhorrence.” It is the latter outcome which the author of *Hebrews* alludes to when he says “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve . . .?” (v. 29).

Is it really possible the author is addressing the same who “have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10)? The author confirms his severe warning from Scripture, “for we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’¹³ And again, ‘The LORD will judge His people’¹⁴ (v. 30).

Nowhere in Scripture are the people of God confronted with what the author says next: “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). This statement emphatically restates verse 27, “a terrifying expectation of judgment”, and affirms that God’s judgment will be more terrifying than anything imagined.¹⁵ Those among His people that do not heed the warning will suffer grave consequences.

Whereas many desire to deflect or mitigate the consequences that Scripture declares concerning sin, the LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE. Less we think the author has in view anyone else, let us consider to whom his letter is addressed: “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”

¹³ The citation is from Deuteronomy 32:35a, and also quoted by Paul in Romans 12:19.

¹⁴ The citation is from Deuteronomy 32:36a.

¹⁵ The quarreling among the redeemed throughout the centuries as to whether those who belong to Christ can lose their salvation is mute, for Scripture never speaks concerning it for good reason. One cannot lose what one does not possess. “Salvation” and “everlasting life” are associated with and come to fruition when Jesus inaugurates His earthly kingdom. What the Scriptures do declare is whether those whom He raises at His coming will be awakened “to everlasting life” or “to disgrace, to everlasting abhorrence”—all of which are God’s redeemed people. Also, the Scriptures proclaim when Christ comes and raises the dead, He will not judge whether they are His, but recompense according to their deeds (Psalm 62:11-12; Luke 14:12-14; Romans 2:5-8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-8; Ephesians 5:3-5; 6:7-8; James 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 2:7, 25-28; 3:11-12, 21; 22:12).

(Hebrews 3:1). These are they who are directly addressed throughout the letter, and the same ones who, if “go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”.

On the Day of Atonement, the redeemed people of God stood earnestly outside the earthly tabernacle until their high priest appeared for the second time outside the Holy of Holies. We, who by faith have as our confession that Jesus Christ is our High Priest, also wait with great expectation for our heavenly High Priest who will appear a second time.

Hebrews 9:24-28

“²⁴For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. ²⁵nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶Otherwise, 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. ²⁷And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, ²⁸so 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 await Him.”

After His ascension, Jesus entered once into the Holy Sanctuary as High Priest and remains in the presence of God to make propitiation for the sins of His people. He was able to do this based on His substitutionary sin-offering He offered once, the only sin-offering which God accepts for the redemption and propitiation for the forgiveness of His peoples' sins.

Christ “will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*” (v. 28). He will never again enter into the Holy of Holies to make propitiation for the sin of His people—for this purpose He entered once for all. Once Christ Jesus emerges from the Holy of Holies, it will then be too late for His people to confess their sin and draw near with a sincere heart.

Those who eagerly await Christ's appearance understand the importance of His ministry as their High Priest. They are the "holy brethren" and know for certain "it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment" (Hebrews 9:27), and therefore prepare for it. Hence, they heed the exhortations to draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, and to hold fast the confession of their hope without wavering that God appointed Christ Jesus as their merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.

God has graciously provided the solution so that His redeemed people may be cleansed and forgiven of their sin by the ministry of their High Priest, Jesus Christ. "Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Whether we close our eyes at death or when Jesus appears "a second time" to resurrect those who are His, judgment remains. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that while the opportunity remains, we, as the redeemed, confess our sin and draw near to God with a sincere heart, thereby holding fast to our confession, with the result having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience.

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