



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 9:23 - 28

“The Last Legitimate Sacrifice for Sin”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the privilege of opening the Scriptures, reading the word of God, and thinking about the things that the writers of Holy Scripture have written. We thank Thee for the wonderful way in which the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is set forth, especially, in the Epistle to the Hebrews which we are studying. We thank Thee for the great High Priest that we have, and we thank Thee for all that he accomplishes, the things that he has accomplished and that which he continues to accomplish through his eternal ministry, which has begun and will never end. We thank Thee, too, for the other blessings of the salvation that he has wrought, the presence of the Holy Spirit, a guide, and a teacher. We thank Thee, too, for the providence of God that guards and guides the steps of all of the true saints and believers. We thank Thee for the hope that we have with regard to the future, the coming again of our Lord, and the eternal home that we shall enjoy throughout the ages of eternity.

We know, Lord, that we have hardly any comprehension of the reality of it for our minds are dimmed by sin, and our hearts are also affected by the evil that we have inherited as descendants of Adam, but we have the word of God and we are grateful, Lord, for the insight that our Lord, the prophets, and the apostles have provided for us.

And we pray, again, that Thou wilt guide our thinking as we read and ponder the word this evening. We commit our class to Thee. We thank Thee for each one present, for their lives and for their homes and for their family and for their friends. We pray for them. We pray, especially, for those who are suffering, or who are passing through difficult times in their lives. And, especially, we remember the ones who have requested that the believers in Believers Chapel pray for them. We remember them and ask Thy blessing upon them. And we pray, also, for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon the United States of America, upon our President, and we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to proclaim the word of God to that generation that is largely empty of spiritual reality. May our study this evening glorify our Lord.

We pray, in His name. Amen.

[Message] Well, we've come to one of the great paragraphs in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 9, verse 23 through verse 28. I hesitate to deal with some of the things that are found here because it would be repetitious of some things that we have already spoken about in the previous studies, but we cannot avoid some of them. And, particularly, I'm thinking of the great Day of Atonement, which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews thought so important, since he writes his epistle against a background of that great annual work that the children of Israel were required to follow out. And so it's necessary to refer to some things that we've referred to before and I hope you don't mind the repetition.

But chapter 9 in verse 23 through verse 28, is our passage. Let me read through it and you follow along in your New Testament. I'm reading from the New King James Version, so there may be a few differences with you if you have the New American Standard Bible or the New International Version or the King James Version.

“Therefore, it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another, He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Speaking on this topic, some months back, I made reference to the fact in the introduction that this is a passage full of great biblical words. Notice some of the words. In verse 26 and verse 28, we have the biblical term “sin.” Our human pride with its peacock’s feathers would like to forget it but that would be fatal. W. H. Auden, a well-known twentieth century poet, has said, “All sin tends to be addictive and the terminal point of addiction is what is called damnation.” How true that is. Judgment, verse 27, and, “as it is appointed for men to die once but after this the judgment.” And then the word death, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,” verse 27.

One of the great preachers who is well known in American life, Henry Ward Beecher, when he was on his death bed, he said, “Now comes the mystery.” And how true that is when we lie upon our death bed and unless our Lord comes most of us will have that experience. The others may not even have the experience of lying upon the bed. We might well remember the fact that we could, ourselves, say, “Now comes the mystery.” As Christians, of course, we would be looking at a mystery which has a favorable conclusion. But for others who have no hope, it’s different. Hobbs said when

he was at death's door, “I'm taking a fearful leap in the dark.” And it must be, of course, as far as the man outside of Christ is concerned when he lies upon his deathbed and thinks about the fact that death is coming. It must be really a very, very fearful experience. You probably know some of that from your own experience. So death verse 27.

Death, Iliard Hubbard defined as “to stop sinning suddenly.” “To stop sinning suddenly,” that's really true, isn't it? Stop sinning suddenly. Don't like to think about it maybe but that's really what it is. And then, follows the wages of that sinning. Carolyn Wells said, “The wages of sin is alimony.” But the wages of sin is a great deal worse than that. It's death.

Now, the fourth word is more important than some we've been talking about, not more important than death, but an extremely important word, the word sacrifice. In verse 23, we had it and then in verse 26, “He then would have had to suffer since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” And the word “blood,” in verse 25, “Not that he should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another.” We think, as we remember the study of the Bible, many of us starting in the simplest way, one of the great themes that was taught us by our Bible teachers and I'm speaking of myself but, I know, others of you have had the same experience was the theme of the blood through the Bible. It has been said to be “a crimson thread through Genesis to the Cross to the Throne,” as set forth in the Book of Revelation.

And then, there is the great word “salvation,” the last word of the passage. “He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” And then, of course, there follows after that Heaven and we have Heaven, we have, in verse 23, “It was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens.” And then in verse 24, “But into Heaven, itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” This is the last and final word, the word heaven then eternal life has begun, in the fullest sense.

In the background of this passage, as I mentioned, is the great ceremony of the Day of Atonement. It was the highlight of the Old Testament ceremonial system and if you'll just remember the fact that it gathered around the sacrifice of the bull for Aaron, the high priest, in order for his own sins to be paid for, typically, in order that he might carry out his ministry. And then, the sacrifice of the two goats, the one goat who was slain and the blood was taken into the Holiest of All and sprinkled before the mercy seat and then the other goat, Azazel, the goat of departure, the scapegoat, over that goat was confessed the sins of the children of Israel and it was sent off into the wilderness. The Hebrew text says into a land “cut off.” And so at the indication of it is that it's sent out to a place where those sins, typically, would not return. It was the Old Testament way of trying to express the fact that that of which the type spoke was a final forgiveness. So the sins went off into, as the Authorized Version renders it, “Into a land not inhabited.” And they would not come back and trouble those whose sins had been confessed by the high priest over that goat.

Now, if you'll think about the service of the great Day of Atonement when you have the altar out in the open place before the tabernacle itself where the animals were slain, and then if you will think of the second position of the high priest as in the Holiest of All, as he has passed into the tabernacle, through the Holy Place, the first part of the tabernacle, into the Holiest of All, where the Ark of the Covenant was; that's the second great position. And then the third would be when he appears again, having finished his work, and the children of Israel seeing him would have had confidence by virtue of his appearance that what he had done for them; for he did it for them according to the Day of Atonement ceremony, it would have indicated to them that God had accepted what he did. And they were, therefore, in covenant relation again for one full year; for that's all that the children of Israel had. They didn't have a final forgiveness. They had a forgiveness that every year had to be renewed in the great Day of Atonement.

So those three positions, if we'll think about them, at the brazen altar of sacrifice, before the Ark of the Covenant and then his appearing afterwards to the crowd gathered around; those three great places are the places around which our author has built his particular paragraph.

Now, you'll notice, also, if you have the Authorized Version that we have each one of these positions referred to by the one word “appear.” Notice now in verse 24, he says, “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Now, that, of course, is the second position in the presence of the Lord in the Holiest of All. Then verse 26 says, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” That, of course, a reference to the brazen altar where the animals were slain. It mentions the sacrifice of himself. And then, finally, verse 28, “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for him, he will appear a second time apart from sin, for salvation.”

These three “appearings” that was a favor that the translators of the Authorized Version did for all preachers thereafter because who has not heard a sermon on the “Three Appearings” if he's been in an evangelical church very long? Now, if you've been in an evangelical church very long and you don't remember a sermon on the “Three Appearings,” you were sleeping. You were not paying attention because this is a passage that preachers have used over and over again. You don't have to look for an outline. “The Three Appearings,” first, second, and third most preachers can count that far; so three appearing.

Now, they epitomize these three appearings; the saving ministry to Abraham's seed. The second one of these, when he appears at the brazen altar, for the sacrifice of himself, marks the climax of human history because it's the foundation of verse of the first appearing and of the third appearing and, in fact, in the original text we read, “Now once

at the end of the ages,” in my version but in some of the versions it is translated “now once at the climax of history.” The climax of history everything moved up toward the Cross, and everything since the Cross has moved from the Cross. The Cross is the climax of human history, and it’s the climax of the divine work, for that matter.

So we’re going to just, in a sense, mediate upon these three appearances. Now, before we do that, I want to make one other point, which I would make normally, but I’ll in the course of the message, but I want to do it now because one of the very striking things about the three appearances of our Lord is that the expression the “three appearances” is derived from the King James Version because in the original text where each one of these words translated ‘appear’ occur, there’s a different verb, a different Greek verb, so that would mean that Paul couldn’t speak of the “three appearances.” He never preached a sermon on the “three appearances” because those words were different. So we’re going to have to explain them and so as we go along, we’ll talk about that.

Now, we’re going to look first at the second of these because we’re going to look at the historical order. That is, we want to look at our Lord by the brazen altar, then our Lord in the Holiest of All, and then our Lord having completed the sacrificial work and the work inside the Holiest of All. So we’ll look at verse 25 and verse 26.

“Not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has [Now, our Greek word. This word is a word that means to manifest. “He has been manifested,” He has been shown to be, openly.] He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

The final, climactic revelation, one could have said with reference to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you could respond to it, knowing the end to the beginning,

you could have said at the time of the Cross, “Lord, thou hast kept the best wine until now,” because this is the climax of the ministry of salvation.

Now, we see, we read here, “He has been manifested to put away sin.” Let’s think about that for a moment. “To put away sin.” It’s so common that generally when we read this, I’m speaking of myself, always, maybe you, of course, have a different feeling about it, but when I read, “To put away sin,” sometimes it’s so common to me that I miss what is really suggested by it. And let me do it by saying what it is not. He did not come to deny sin. He did not come to soften the penalty for sin. He did not come to redefine sin. He did not come to call it a mistake. He did not appear or was not manifested to speak of it as error. So he did not come to redefine sin.

We, as human beings, constantly do that. And so we use euphemistic terms for the things that Scripture refers to. Disease instead of sin, we are afflicted with various kinds of diseases and sin is a disease. It’s not sin, it’s a disease. As a matter of fact, even the term disease suggests a kind of nice word. It’s not “ease,” its dis-ease. But it’s not an eternal damning fact disease. So we call it mistake or we call it an error. And so many of the things in our everyday life are referred to by these euphemistic terms; we make them sound nice when they are really not nice according to the truth of God’s word. He did not come to redefine sin. It is sin. He did not come to lull us into a false sense of security. He came to put away sin. How? Well, he says, “By the sacrifice of Himself.”

Now, bear in mind this, it is very, very hard to put away sin. Why? Religion cannot do it. You can engage in all kinds of religion but it does not put away sin. You may be a regular attender in your church, a regular attender upon the services, you may attend the Sunday school, you may be confirmed and various other types of things, but religion does not put away sin. You may be a very religious person and a very lost person. In fact, most religious people today may fall into the category of lostness. Think of it now? What’s the greatest ritual of all? What’s the greatest liturgical system of all? Well, if we are Protestant we think, well, the Presbyterian’s don’t have much, although

they are following the Episcopalians these days and they are seeking to make their liturgy a bit more appealing to the eye, and so we have certain things in the Presbyterian Church that never existed earlier.

I know, when I grew up, the Presbyterian Church was very simple. There was a pulpit. There were hymns that were sung. The Nicene Creed was not recited but the Apostles' Creed was recited and the Gloria was sung, and it was primarily a preaching service, a ministry of the word, today it's a little bit different. Various other things are added. And, of course, we have the choirs and we have the soloists and let us stop at that point.

Now, the Episcopalians have always been a few steps ahead of us, so far as liturgy is concerned. And, as a matter of fact, even in evangelicalism today, there is a resurgence of interest in the liturgical. Why is this so? Well, one of the reasons it's so is because of our evangelical churches where the word of God was preached are today empty buildings where the word of God is not preached. And so the emptiness of a church in which the word of God is not preached in the power of the Holy Spirit is the reason why some people look for something else.

Now, they are looking for appearances, of course, because they are going for liturgy. And liturgy does not put away sin. The most impressive ritual that we know in Christianity is the impressive, very impressive, ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. The Anglican Church in its most orthodox appearing form is very much like the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the Anglo-Catholic Church is really a Catholic Church without worship of the Pope or without regard for the Pope that the Roman Catholic Church has. But other Anglican Churches are different. Even the low Anglican Church has a great deal of liturgy in it.

But now, if you have all of this liturgy -- and let's acknowledge that some of it is beautiful, it's impressive. You look at it and men in robes are seeking to illustrate by what they are doing certain facts of the Christian faith, it's very impressive. But what is

the most impressive of all the rituals, the liturgies? Why it was the children of Israel's liturgy. Why is it the most impressive? It was divinely given. The Roman Catholic ritual was not divinely given. The Anglican ritual is not divinely given. This was divinely given, the ritual. And so the priests had impressive garments and even changed those impressive garments for other impressive garments on the Day of Atonement. Everything was designed to be impressive and it came from God. And it had specific theological meaning, but it didn't put away sin. It didn't put away the sin of one Israelite, not one. Not one Israelite could ever say, “I was saved by the Mosaic Law. I was saved by the liturgy of the great Day of Atonement.” It did not save a single person. That's how dead liturgy is. The human man, afflicted with sin, we become impressed with things like this and so we go on saying, “Wasn't that impressive? Wasn't that something?” We say, “Wasn't that spiritual?” Liturgy does not save, does not put away sin. The great Day of Atonement, still called by Israelites today, over right on the corner of Alpha and Hillcrest and there, in the Synagogue there, it will be referred to as *yoma*, the Day, *payom*, the Hebrew has it; *yoma*, the Day of Atonement. The robes, the incense, the beauty of the ceremony, all of that may be there but, of course, they cannot carry out the Day of Atonement now, like they were told to do. But the ritual does not save. Impressive ritual does not save.

We could even go on and say, of course, ritual does not put away sin. Redefining sin does not put it away. Lulling people into false security does not put away sin. Holy living does not put away sin. Self-denial does not put away sin. Death does not put it away. Hell cannot put it away. And even repentance that is not given by God does not put away sin. A man can be very sorry for his sin and still be lost. Have you ever noticed David's confession in Psalm 51? Great confession of sin, marvelous confession of sin, but did you ever hear him? Did you ever read in Psalm 51 that “My sin was forgiven because I was so sorry for my sin?” The repentance that saves is the repentance, only the repentance that is given by God that the knowledge that the repentance is a gift, won by

the saving sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. So “He was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Hard to put away sin, but Christ has put away sin. What a work.

Spurgeon talks about, “Speak of the labors of Hercules! Speak of the labors of Emmanuel! That is the greatest of all the works.” Luther once said, “Lord, strike, for I am forgiven.” He was ready to go to Heaven, being forgiven, ready to go. And, again, how was our Lord the sacrifice for our sin? Not by his life, not by his prayers, not by his good works, not by his tears, not by his pains, not by his groans, but by the sacrifice of himself. Do you get the point? I’m trying to underline the point that it was the blood shedding, the sacrifice, the satisfaction. Calvary, that is the ground of our salvation. Any kind of preaching that does not center around that is not the preaching that the Bible sets forth. We have so much today that is other than this! But this is what our author says. Our Lord has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. That’s the first of the historical appearances.

Now, of course, the second follows, and if you will just think of the Day of Atonement and the ceremony, you will, I think, grasp the point which he makes in verse 24.

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but [now] into heaven itself,’ [I said, “now”] but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

So he has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. It was, certainly, a great manifestation. All Jerusalem knew what Christ was suffering. It was the center of everything and, of course, the center of everything in history was what was transpiring there. So he was manifested.

Now, this second appearing is interesting because the verb again that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses is not the word that was used in the first instance. This is

a word that means “to appear openly.” So it’s to appear openly. Now, I underline that because, remember, when the high priest, after he had shed the blood, he took the blood into the Holiest of All, and sprinkled it before the mercy seat. Now, remember, that even before that the high priest had gone in with blood for himself, but he had also gone in with incense, and so he had taken the incense in and the incense had been burned. And so that the holy place would have been filled with the incense. To put it more vividly, not ever having been there, no one living now ever has been, let’s just imagine it with clouds of incense because the incense was there. And so the idea of “to appear openly” is very significant because those priests. The fact that God had the incense in the room that part of the tabernacle before Aaron even went in with the blood was designed it seems to me, to say even with the blood of the animal, you don’t get a clear picture of the presence of God. It’s as if he’s saying, “I have said that this is the ceremony by which we illustrate what is going to happen, but with the incense, it’s saying this, itself, does not give you yet a clear picture of what it is for the Messianic King and High Priest to enter into the presence of God openly,” freely, on the ground of the sacrifice.

So to appear openly, so the Son of God, this just reminds us of the shrouding of the Ark with the cloud of incense. But in the case of our Lord, there is no need for the shrouding of the Holiest of All for he’s the second person of the Trinity. He possesses deity, the same deity that the Father possesses, the same being. So in carrying out his atoning work, there is no such thing as shrouding. Our Lord takes, typically, on the ground of his sacrifice, he enters into the presence of God in the fullness of the oneness that the Son, the eternal Son, has with the eternal Father, throughout the ages past and into the future.

So as he says, “Into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Now, that is a striking statement. “To appear for us.” That means, my Christian friend, that at this very moment, at this very moment, Jesus Christ is in the presence of God for us! For you! For me! Our representative High Priest, who stands for us! What assurance

that should give us! What confidence that that great High Priest, the Son of God, is my representative in the presence of God at this very moment! My representative! For me! That’s my standing in him! What could give us greater assurance of the possession of eternal life? So he appears for us. Luther had a statement on, “For us.” I’m not sure I can find it. It’s probably not worth finding it because I’ve probably included most of what he said. But he said something to the effect that we should not forget those words, “For us,” and he underlined that particular point.

But now, let’s go on to the third of these appearances in verse 27 and verse 28. Here now, there is a comparison made by our author. “Men die once,” hence the incongruity of deaths for him. So he says, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” Men die once! And so the Son of God dies once. It would be incongruous to think of him dying more than once. So he makes that statement, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation;” the appointment to death and to judgment. He’s appeared to put away sacrifice, sin by the sacrifice of himself, and it’s appointed to men to die once. So Christ was offered once, appointed for death, appointed to judgment.

We, of course, cannot neglect this appointment. It was voluntary with our Lord. If you go all the way back to Genesis, chapter 3 in verse 19, and there in the judgment that was pronounced upon Adam and Eve, we have this statement, you’ll catch the force of it. “In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” Underline “shall.” “And to dust you shall return.”

Daniel Webster, toward the end of his life, related how once he attended a divine service in a quiet country village. He said the man who was preaching, the clergyman, as he put it, “was a simple-hearted, pious old man. And after the opening exercises, he rose

and pronounced his text. And then with the utmost simplicity and earnestness said, ‘My friends, we can die but once.’ He said, ‘frigid and weak as these words might seem,’” Webster commented, “at once, they were, to me, among the most impressive and awakening I ever heard. My friends, we can die but once.” Now, I confess, that kind of makes an impression on me, too. It makes more of an impression now than it did forty years ago, even when I knew that. My friends, we can die but once. My friends, fellow believers, some who may not be believers in Believers Chapel, “we can die but once;” that the word of God teaches us from the beginning. It’s very, very important for us to bear that in mind.

Epicurus, whom the Greeks know, once said this. “Thus, that which is the most awful of evils, death, is nothing to us, since when we exist there is no death. And when there is death, we do not exist.” That’s very comforting until you read the word of God. “But then it is appointed for men to die once and after this the judgment.” Epicurus didn’t understand, of course, biblical truth, and he didn’t know that clause, “After this the judgment.” But we do.

There are different ways in which people die, of course. You can die the wrong way. One of the men of the Old Testament, one of the kings died the wrong way in 2 Chronicles chapter 21 in verse 20. I know you’re interested in where I am in the Bible, on my second time through. Well, I think, let’s see, last night I finished, Dan, and I think, I’m at Habakkuk, almost into the New Testament. But as 2 Chronicles chapter 21 in verse 20, Jehoram’s death is described in verse 18 and 19 and 20. Well, I’ll read verse 20, “He was thirty-two years old when he became king. He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and to no ones sorrow, departed.” However, “they buried him in the city of David but not in the tomb of the kings.” “He reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and to no ones sorrow, departed.” That’s a very interesting thing because, you know, you know, do you remember who Jehoram was? He was Jehoshaphat’s son, a godly king. But when he died, it was to no ones sorrow. And do you know who was his preacher? Now, I’m

talking all age. Do you know who the prophet was with whom he was familiar and under whom he lived? Elijah! So here is a man with a godly father and a prophet active, like Elijah and he died to no ones sorrow.

I don't consider myself much of a preacher but, you know, if you pass out of this auditorium and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and you never do, it might be put over your tomb from heaven's standpoint, "This man heard the word of God. He heard the Gospel that men are saved by Jesus Christ, and he heard it from the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 9, verse 23 through 28, and he did not respond." That would be a horrible, a horrible destiny. Would it not?

So we may die the wrong way. Take Absalom? Absalom had all of the greatest of the advantages. He was David's son, a beautiful young man who stood out in the crowd. But then, of course, a wasted life. Absalom, the one over whom David mourned so by saying in 2 Samuel chapter 18 in verse 33, "The king was deeply moved," when he heard of Absalom's death. He "went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!'" This is the one who in chapter 14, is described as, "Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Ah but there was a blemish in his heart, a blemish in his heart that was the significant thing.

We may die, of course, the right way. Stephen died the right way. Stephen, remember, died in such a way that when he died, our Lord stood up whether to greet him or not we're not absolutely certain, but it seems as you read the word or it seems as you read the word that our Lord rose up from the seat by the side of the Father and welcomed Stephen because of the godly life that he had lived. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O, my friend, be sure that you belong to the company of the saints. Your death then will be precious.

Well, there is an appointment for salvation and so he says in verse 28, “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear.” This word is the third of our words; it’s another Greek word different from the other two. It means simply to be seen. “He will be seen a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” The high priest after he had sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, remember, turned, went out of the tabernacle and then Israel gathered around the tabernacle would have reason for joy of the sense of the fact that God had responded to the ceremony that he, himself, had instituted, meaning that Israel was for one more year in right relationship with him in Covenant relationship with him. And so the high priest’s reappearance after the sprinkling of the mercy seat was the sign of the blessing of God upon the people.

In our case, that corresponds to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and, as he appeared to those who eagerly waited for him then, he will be seen by the whole of this world a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Bringing salvation to all of his saints and the sin question will not be raised because that has been taken care of at the cross at Calvary.

Notice too, it’s to them that look for him. Now, in my feeling, that refers to all the saints because all the saints look for him. That’s a natural response of all the saints. I know, it’s possible to say there are some of the saints who are not looking for him and look it at that way. I don’t look at it that way when I read this, “He will appear a second time to those who eagerly wait for Him.” To my mind, that refers to all the true believing ones. It’s the characteristic of the saints of God expressed perhaps by 1 Corinthians chapter 1 in verse 7, where the Apostle Paul says, “So that you come short,” you Corinthians, “in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So characteristic of them, they eagerly waited for the coming of the Lord. That’s characteristic of the saints of God. They were a carnal group, the book says, 1 Corinthians, but they as saints eagerly waited for the Lord.

So I'm taking this to be “to those who eagerly wait for Him,” that is, all the members of the body, “He will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation;” no more death. The inevitable word, death, that all of us must go through, if we do not live till our Lord's coming, gives way to the eternal word, life, life, life, salvation, through Christ.

Well, our time is about up. Let me just summarize. Somewhere back in my past, it's growing dim in some spots, I don't remember everything. There are lots of things that I have written down, fortunately. And I don't remember where I found this, it was in a little book somewhere. I think it was in book written by one of the Christian brethren. But summarizing these things under three headings, three lines of things; hath appeared, does appear, shall appear. Hath appeared in the past, does appear in the present at the right hand of the throne of God for us, shall appear in the future. Hath appeared at Calvary. Does appear in Heaven. Shall appear in the air. Has appeared for propitiation, at the Cross. Does appear to carry out His intercession at the right hand of the throne of God. Shall appear in final deliverance at His second advent. Has appeared for redemption. Does appear for representation. Shall appear for reward, in His second coming. Has appeared in humiliation. Does appear in exaltation. Shall appear in world-wide manifestation. Has appeared for atonement. Shall or does appear at the right hand of the Father in priesthood. Shall appear for salvation. Has appeared for justification. Does appear for sanctification, which He carries on now. Shall appear for our glorification.

That's mighty nice, isn't it? Those three aspects of our Lord's work represented by that. Two appearings my friends, have taken place. He has been manifested at Calvary. At the present moment, he appears openly by the right hand of God as our great High Priest. One of the manifestations remains. And the question, of course, is, are we really looking for him? Are we eagerly looking for him? Is it really part of our Christian life to do what our author calls “eagerly wait for him”?

There’s one interesting thing, too, that I’d like to mention. If Israel refused the priest’s work, judgment was their experience. They were required to afflict themselves on the Day of Atonement. If they didn’t afflict themselves, they were cut off from the children of Israel. That is, the ceremony was not simply an outward ceremony for Israel. They were to enter into it. And the individual Israelites were to enter into what the high priest was doing with reference to their own sin before God in Heaven. That’s important for us, as well. Personal experience of what our Lord has accomplished.

Let us never think, for one moment, that because we attend services, because we are part of a church, because we engage in religious exercises, even religious feelings, if there is not the personal relationship, the affliction that comes from the recognition of my sin and the recognition of Christ’s death for my sin. That’s so important. He appears openly at this very moment for us; claim that for yourself is my urgent appeal to you.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous words written by this unknown author of Scripture. We don’t have to know his name, Lord, we recognize the hand of God the Holy Spirit in Scripture. We recognize the hand of our great God in the Old Testament ceremonies pointing forward to the one who is the preeminent Son and Lord of all, Jesus Christ. We worship him. We praise Thee, Father, for him. We desire to know him better, to love him more deeply, to be more effective in our Christian testimony. O God, enable us. Bless this church and its leadership, to that end.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.