

**Text: Heb 9.25-26**

Well, today we will inch forward by one more concept in our study. I say this almost apologetically, as I am well known for slow progress through our texts. The reason I use this approach is there is so much to think about in every portion of the Bible that I don't want to miss anything.

The risk of this approach is that we can "miss the forest for the trees," as the saying goes. In other words, I spend so much time on the details that you may not grasp the whole flow of the passage.

Occasionally, then, I need some big picture messages to summarize the whole passage. Perhaps we are coming to that soon, but it won't be this week or next week.

As I see it, there is a logical progression from the necessity mentioned in Heb 9.22 to the conclusion of Heb 9.23 and a subsequent necessary observation that will be our message in Heb 9.25-26.

Read Heb 9.22-26, text 25-26

Let's outline the logic of the passage:

1. Everything must be cleansed (ritually) by blood (22)
2. Therefore, the earthly tabernacle must be cleansed by blood *and* the heavenly original likewise (23)
3. But the heavenly original was only cleansed once (25) [stated negatively in the text]

So, our message today is about the "once for all" cleansing and our title is:

**The One Sacrifice**

We are well aware that Jesus was offered once. Our author is going to underscore that point in our text. "nor ... often" (25), "now once" (26).

Our author will go to a *reductio ad absurdum* – a "reduction to the absurd" – to make his point. Beyond that, though, there is a deep theological reason that makes Christ's sacrifice so effective that it need be offered only once, and that everyone who believes can receive the benefit of the sacrifice.

That is where we are heading with this message.

**Proposition: Only one cross was necessary to save all men who believe.**

## I. The many compared to the one

### A. Insert “necessary” into the sentence

1. Often in the NT, words are left out, leaving it to the reader to supply
2. It was necessary ... [to cleanse] the heavenly things (“cleanse” is understood) (23)
3. Our text: “nor was it that he would offer himself often” – I think we need to add “necessary”

nor was it [necessary] that he would offer himself often

### B. The OT necessity: many cleansings, many offerings

1. The parallel is the day of Atonement (much referenced in this chapter)
2. Priest enters the Holy of holies to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat to atone for the people
3. He does this every year

Back in May, I calculated an approximate number of sacrifices that *could* have been offered through the OT system<sup>1</sup>

- a. Exodus 1445 BC, Aaron appointed by, say 1445
- b. Crucifixion AD 30 (approx.)
- c. 1475 years for potential sacrifices, including 1475 Yom Kippurs (Days of Atonement)
- d. Leave off 70 years for the Babylonian captivity (and other failures) = about 1400 occurrences of the Day of Atonement by the time of the crucifixion

### C. The proposition: It was not necessary for Christ to offer himself often, as compared to OT system

1. Jesus came to earth, born of a virgin, grew, “increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Lk 2.52)

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<sup>1</sup> See 240505a.Heb0726-28.docx — sermon: “Such a High Priest”

2. Jesus lived a sinless life — he “knew no sin” (2 Co 5.21)
3. Yet Jesus suffered the penalty of death — man’s penalty for sin

The person who sins will die. (Ezek 18.20)

4. Jesus suffered this death *once*, not many times

## II. The absurdity of turning the one into many

### A. The *reductio ad absurdum* — “reduction to absurdity”

***reductio ad absurdum*** (Latin for “reduction to absurdity” ... is the form of argument that attempts to establish a claim by showing that the opposite scenario would lead to absurdity or contradiction.<sup>2</sup>

1. If one sacrifice not enough, how many would be needed?

Apparently, world population is now over 8 billion people

- One website estimates all-time population at 108 billion people
- Another puts it at 117 billion<sup>3</sup>

Of course, they are going back to 7 million BC to make this estimate.

2. Conservative Bible believers hold to a short age of the earth, 6,000 yrs or maybe at most 10,000 yrs
  - a. 6,000 yrs = 2,190,000 days
  - b. Taking just the *present* 8 billion people, Jesus would have to offer the sacrifice 3,653 times a day to cover the people currently alive (assuming one death substitutes for one person)

This is why the statement, “He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world” is a *reductio ad absurdum*

<sup>2</sup> “*Reductio Ad Absurdum*,” in *Wikipedia*, July 10, 2024,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reductio\\_ad\\_absurdum&oldid=1233750634](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reductio_ad_absurdum&oldid=1233750634).

<sup>3</sup> “How Many People Have Ever Lived on Earth?,” PRB, accessed August 24, 2024,

<https://www.prb.org/articles/how-many-people-have-ever-lived-on-earth/>.

Obviously, such a thought is completely impossible

B. But now, once, at the consummation of the ages

1. The consummation of the ages is the focal point of history

“It is not that Christ happened to come at the time of fulfilment but that his coming made that time the time of fulfilment.”<sup>4</sup>

2. Everything about the healing of broken creation hinges on this moment

a. Death came by one man

b. The whole creation groans under the burden of death

c. Life comes by one man who will redeem creation as well

3. He came to put away all sin by the sacrifice of himself

a. All the sins of the eight billion plus people alive today

b. All the sins of all the people in all the years since creation

That is not to say that all men are forgiven, since many will go to destruction

But if every single human wanted salvation, Jesus would only have had to die the death he died to cover the sins of all — he would not have had to die again

### III. The power of the One who makes the one sacrifice so effective

A. The power of the Lord’s death is not in the death he died

1. I say this reverently

2. The death of Jesus on the cross was not more “intense” than any other death in history (he didn’t die a more “deathly” death)

3. The two thieves on either side of him died the same death on the same day, but their deaths counted for nothing

4. His death counts for everything — why the difference

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<sup>4</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 231.

## B. The power of the Lord's death is in the life he offered

"We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son Who was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is truly God and truly Man, one Person with two natures, divine and human, who never sinned while yet dwelling among men as a man, displaying his humanity in his body and his deity in his mighty works."<sup>5</sup>

1. As to his human nature, he died a human death
2. As to his divine nature, he died an infinite death (offering an infinite life)

"The death of Christ is sufficient for all sinners who have ever lived, for it was not merely a finite human, but an infinite God who died. He, the Life, the Giver and Sustainer of life, who did not have to die, died."<sup>6</sup>

- The websites claim somewhere around 108 to 117 billion people for all time
- It wouldn't matter if there were a Billion Billion people — his infinite life could cover them all

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** Only one cross was necessary to save all men who believe.

Today, we aren't concerned (directly) with all the men who ever lived.

We are concerned about you.

If you are saved, it is because "put away [your] sin by the sacrifice of Himself"

If you are not saved, you could be saved, because by one sacrifice, Jesus "put away [your] sin by the sacrifice of Himself"

<sup>5</sup> Grace Baptist Church of Victoria, Articles of Faith, "Jesus Christ"

<sup>6</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), 720.